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THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE
NATIONS

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THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE NATIONS

STUDIES IN
BRITISH COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS

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FOREWORD

IN recent years the student of international relations has toiled under the weight of his good fortune. The opening of the archives of the defeated and the editing of the documents of the victors after both World Wars has thrown a great light upon the origin and character of the struggle for power in our time. That Russia has been even more reticent in victory than in defeat creates, it is true, a regrettable lacuna in the vast mass of documentary evidence available, but to the student of Commonwealth relations that serves merely to quiet his envy for a passing moment. For by the exercise of a discretion, whose wisdom none would wish to question, published documentary evidence about the deliberations which determined the policy of the Commonwealth has been extremely scanty. It is true that the proceedings of Imperial Conferences are available, but instructive and comprehensive though they may be about the constitutional development and machinery of intra-imperial relations, they throw little light on the more subtle influences which determine policy. No one who studies the proceedings of the 1937 Imperial Conference—the most recent that has been held—would learn from them what, for example, were the reactions of the Dominion Prime Ministers to the looming threat of Nazi aggression or of how best they thought it might be countered. Was Mr Chamberlain pressed by the Dominion Prime Ministers at that time, or later, to pursue a firmer and more resolute policy or was he not in fact positively encouraged to explore, to all reasonable limits and beyond, the path of appeasement? In answering an

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important question of this kind, reliance has to be placed not on official documents, but on the candour and occasionally the helpful indiscretions of the responsible Ministers. But many facts essential to any fair or final verdict, both on the individuals concerned and on the role of the various countries of the Commonwealth in moulding its foreign policy, remain unknown. For the later war and early post-war period the lack of authoritative evidence about discussions among the leaders of the Commonwealth is even more pronounced, for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences of 1944 and 1946 precluded by the very informality of their proceedings the publication of any enlightening summary of them.

It is not the purpose of this book of essays to explore systematically or exhaustively the difficult, important, and largely uncharted ground of Commonwealth relations in the last decade. That is a task that I hope to attempt in writing the *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, 1939-49*. The aim of these essays is to fulfil the modest purpose of raising some questions, of examining some developments, and, perhaps above all, of throwing into clearer relief some of the underlying trends in recent Commonwealth thought and practice. For these reasons this book is not, and is not intended to be, anything but selective in its choice of subjects, but I hope the reader will not feel they have been chosen at random. In my own mind at least they have a unity, the unity that comes from a consideration of the principal problems that confront the Commonwealth as a whole and its member States individually today.

Between 1939 and 1945, neither the form nor the fabric of the Commonwealth remained unaltered. In some cases its changed character may best be thrown into relief by considering developments in the organization and the concept of the Commonwealth as a whole; in

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others, by examining the impact of the membership of the new nation States of Asia upon its thought and practice; in others again, by analysing tensions existing within its member States which have reactions outside their own frontiers. If I seem pre-occupied with the problem of nationalism at a time when the economic approach has become so fashionable, that is because I believe that nationalism still remains the most powerful force in world society. Within the field of Commonwealth affairs it has exercised a predominant influence in recent years. It determined the destiny of Ireland a quarter of a century ago; of India, Burma, and Ceylon in our time; and will, sooner rather than later, decide the future of Africa. The superficial manifestations of nationalism may vary from country to country, from continent to continent, but the underlying force remains the same—the desire of communities or nations to govern themselves. Can that aim be reconciled with membership of the British Commonwealth, and, if so, in what form or forms may it find most fruitful expression? Here is a theme with which these studies are predominantly concerned and where much may profitably be learnt from the recent past. The concluding essay in this book in particular is an attempt to relate experience in one continent to the direction of policy in another.

I would like to thank both my colleague Mr F. Ashton-Gwatkin and Mr R. B. Pugh for many helpful criticisms and suggestions. To the Editorial Board of *International Affairs* I am indebted for permission to reprint some part of the essay on 'The Asian Conference 1947' as well as that on 'The Implications of Eire's Relationship with the British Commonwealth of Nations'. The latter was delivered at Chatham House on 25 November 1947, as my inaugural lecture as Abe Bailey Professor of British Commonwealth Relations.

May 1948

N. M.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMONWEALTH TODAY

By general consent the First British Empire came to an end in 1776. After that there seems to be little consensus of opinion among historians about the great watersheds in its history. Sir Alfred Zimmern in his book entitled *The Third British Empire*, published in 1926, explained that the Second British Empire reached 'the culmination of its power and of its development in the Great War',¹ and then expired to be succeeded by a Third British Empire, 'new in its form, new in the conditions which it has to face within and without its borders, new even in its name.' It was in fact blessed with two, 'the Third British Empire', or alternatively 'the British Commonwealth of Nations'. It is, however, a trifle disconcerting to find that Professor Zimmern's Third British Empire evidently wholly escaped the attention of Professor Walker in Cambridge, for in 1943 he was writing of the Second British Empire fighting in alliance with the United States, the Power that had once broken up the First.² Mr H. V. Hodson, on the other hand, has not only taken due note of Professor Zimmern's Third British Empire, but has concluded that its day is over. 'The Third British Empire', he writes, 'has passed into history'. . . . It 'has

¹ Sir Alfred Zimmern, *The Third British Empire* (London, Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 3.

² E. A. Walker, *The British Empire. Its Structure and Spirit*. (Oxford University Press under the auspices of the R.I.A.A., 1943), p. 1.

disappeared, as it were, overnight. Independence for India and Burma was not fatal to it; it could well have survived without them. But with the virtual decease of the Imperial Conference and the idea that it stood for, and with the radical changes in the economic and military balance of forces effected by the war of 1939-45, the Third British Empire perished, and as we look about us we see a Fourth British Empire with characteristics of its own.'¹

While it would, of course, be convenient were agreement to be reached about the successive British Empires through which we have lived—and some members of this generation may apparently hope to live through no fewer than three—the practice of affixing these labels is not wholly gain. It suggests not steady development, but a series of sudden transformations. But the truth surely is that the British Empire, both in practice and in theory, has evolved, and though in our day the pace of its evolution has been notably quickened, its direction has not changed. The autonomy of the Dominions, their separate role in foreign policy, the concept of many nations within one Commonwealth certainly do not derive from the declarations of the Imperial Conference of 1926. What happened then was that formal recognition was given to ideas and conventions which had been steadily gaining ground and an ever-widening measure of assent in all parts of the Empire.

If the First World War accentuated sharply the tendency towards decentralization within the Commonwealth, the principle of decentralization had been accepted as fundamental long before 1914. It was not something that emerged abruptly, transforming the character of the Empire. 'Decentralization and liberty'

¹ H. V. Hodson, *Twentieth Century Empire* (London, Faber & Faber, 1948), p. 160.

said General Botha at the Imperial Conference in 1911, 'have done wonders.' 'It is the policy of decentralization', he repeated, 'which has made the British Empire.' What he said was reiterated with equal conviction by Sir Robert Borden and by other Empire statesmen then assembled in London. Finally, Mr Asquith summed up the position to the assembled representatives of the Commonwealth: 'We each of us are, and we each of us intend to remain, masters in our own house. This is . . . the lifeblood of our polity.' This trend was also recognized by foreign observers. 'Mr Borden, the Canadian Prime Minister', reported Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, German Ambassador in London, in August 1912 when Anglo-German naval rivalry was at its height, 'has been here for weeks with various members of his Ministry. Honour is paid to him as a great personage. He has already given promises as to providing ships. But he makes conditions. Membership of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which has existed for some years and admits the members of the Dominions in an advisory capacity, no longer contents him. He wishes that the Dominions shall possess a decisive vote in the deliberations upon which peace or war depend.'¹

There is no lack of convincing evidence that since the turn of the century and earlier the more persistent current in Imperial affairs was flowing towards an ever greater degree of decentralization. The First World War did no more than increase its momentum. There was no sharp break with the past, no ending of a well-defined phase in Empire history, but with the enhanced power and prestige of the Dominions a spreading outwards of the predominant thought of the inner circle of Empire statesmen until finally it received formal endorsement between 1926 and 1931.

¹ *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette*, Vol. XXXI, p. 241.

Mr Amery, who was Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs during the 1926 Imperial Conference, recalls that the committee to consider imperial relations, over which Lord Balfour presided, 'tacitly rejected from the outset any attempt to frame or even to discuss any new constitutional scheme, and confined itself to the task of clarifying and defining, by common consent, the position which we had reached.'¹ And he adds very justly that if the Balfour Declaration gave a new and fruitful impulse to the subsequent course of constitutional development, and became a landmark in British history, that was in full accord with British constitutional tradition, for in their day Magna Carta and the Declaration of Rights had been regarded as no more than explicit assertions of recognized rights. The Declaration of 1926 was a symbol of achievement, not a starting point. Since then this evolutionary development has continued with steady persistence in the same direction. Neither Imperial Conferences nor the Statute of Westminster nor the later withering away of the central institutional machinery of the Commonwealth marked the high-tide of the process of decentralization.

'In the Commonwealth', observed Field-Marshal Smuts in his speech to the Empire Parliamentary Association in November 1943, 'we follow to the limit the principle of decentralization.' If the emphasis is passing from the constitutional to the functional field, the principle remains the same.

Parallel with the enumeration has gone the practice of renaming the successive British Empires. Here the measure of agreement is even less and nothing, indeed, has more effectively underlined the untidy, complex character

¹ L. S. Amery, *Thoughts on the Constitution* (Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 128.

of the Empire than the search for a congenial and accurate name. Enumeration and rechristening have at least one motive in common—the desire to show that there has been a change of heart from the self-glorifying imperialism of the *fin de siècle*. The Third British Empire was something far different from, and far better than the Second; the British Commonwealth of Nations, symbolizing in its name a partnership of free and equal peoples, was nobler in its aims and aspiration than any Empire. Its foundation was not rule imposed from without but free co-operation of equals. In this way, mingled with a mood of repentance, anxious to escape from the flamboyant and sordid memories with which the word ‘Empire’ had become associated, went the fervour of a high idealism, seeking a name to symbolize its ideal.¹ So the term ‘Commonwealth’ came into use, satisfying to the repentant and the aspiring alike. And the emphasis from the first was rightly placed on the aspiration. ‘The British Commonwealth is itself’, said Sir Robert Borden in 1920, ‘a community or league of nations which may serve as an exemplar to that world-wide League of Nations which was founded in Paris on 28th of last June.’² It was something different in kind from the Empires of the past and the other Empires of the present. Surely it was right that it should discard the rather tarnished designation of Empire and become the British Commonwealth of Nations? But the older name, invested with the lustre of a great tradition, declined and still declines, to give way.

The phrase British Commonwealth of Nations, whose official origin may be traced to Resolution IX of the Imperial War Conference of 1917, which spoke of a full

¹ cf. W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs* (Oxford University Press for R.I.I.A., 1937), Vol. I, p. 53 *seq.*

² *Journal of the Parliaments of the Empire*, Vol. I, p. 87.

recognition of the Dominions as 'autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth', received a fuller sanction in a final form by its insertion in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, and has since passed into common usage.¹ But those who use it attribute different meanings to it. To some 'Commonwealth' is synonymous with 'Empire'. To others it is only a part of it—that part which comprises the self-governing Dominions. To others again, mindful of its origin, the Commonwealth represents the aspiration, the ideal, whereas the Empire represents tradition. The 1926 Report of the Committee on Imperial Relations records in its memorable phrases that the Dominions 'are autonomous communities within the British Empire, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.' Is this a deliberately indiscriminate use of the words 'Empire' and 'Commonwealth'? Mr Amery assures us that it is not. The word 'Empire', he says, was used to describe the British political organism as a whole because 'no other term would be appropriate to the totality of autonomous states, dependencies, colonies, protectorates, mandated territories, feudatories and allies which are comprehended within the orbit of our polity. Within that wider whole the relationship of certain of its members constitutes a definite political system whose character is appropriately designated by the fine old title "Commonwealth".'² During the Second World War Mr Churchill used and popularized the dual title 'Commonwealth and Empire', which suggested that the one was incomplete without the other both in sentiment

¹ Mr Lionel Curtis was first to apply the phrase to the British Empire; *vide* Hancock, loc. cit., for an account of the reasons which inspired him.

² op. cit., pp. 130-131.

and in territorial application. Mr Mackenzie King went further, declaring that the terms Commonwealth and Empire were synonymous and interchangeable. But since the war, the emphasis has shifted once again.

On 2 July 1947, Mr Attlee announced in the House of Commons that the titles of the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and of the Dominions Office were to be changed to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, and Commonwealth Relations Office, respectively. The reason he gave for this change was the feeling in certain quarters in the United Kingdom, as well as in the Dominions, that the old titles were no longer entirely appropriate and, indeed, were liable to convey a misleading impression of the relations that in fact existed.¹ Since not only the Colonial Office but also the India and Burma Offices were at that time in existence, the change must be taken to imply that the word 'Commonwealth' is correctly to be attributed only to the fully self-governing members of the Empire, because those are the only members (with a few incidental exceptions) with which the rechristened Dominions Office has relations. But how unsafe a guide in the affairs of the Commonwealth is logical deduction! Within less than six months the House of Lords sanctioned a new meaning for the word 'Commonwealth' which conflicted with all reasonable deductions to be made from the change in title of the Dominions Office. There was something very characteristic about the way in which it happened.

At the Committee stage of the Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Bill in the House of Lords, Lord Altrincham drew attention to the fact that in the Medical Register, which includes separate lists for colonial and foreign practitioners, the word 'colonial' was used to cover all the

¹ *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 439, Col. 1320, 2 July 1947.

territories within the Empire, whether self-governing or non-self-governing. Lord Henderson, on behalf of the Government, agreed that the use of this word, in a way which had already begun to acquire its modern restricted meaning in 1886 when the Medical Act was passed, was altogether unsuitable. To find an alternative was not, however, as easy as to say that an alternative should be found. Ultimately, after consultation with the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Colonial Office, a new compromise was reached, according to which 'Commonwealth' as a general term may be correctly applied to all the territories owing allegiance to the Crown, or, as Lord Altrincham remarked, 'of what was once called the British Empire'. In recommending the use of the word 'Commonwealth' in this sense Lord Henderson explained that the term 'British Commonwealth of Nations' is recognized and accepted as connoting the present association of the Dominions and the United Kingdom as independent nations, the word 'Empire' is not universally popular, and so to the word 'Commonwealth' alone may be attributed the wider meaning of all territories within the Empire.¹

This definition marked a new departure, for while the 'British Commonwealth of Nations' had often been used in its restricted meaning, and the designation 'Empire' applied only to non-self-governing territories, the word 'Commonwealth' as distinct from the phrase 'British Commonwealth of Nations' had not hitherto been applied to all the territories owing allegiance to the Crown. The position, therefore, is that today it is correct to speak of 'the British Commonwealth of Nations' together with 'the Colonial Empire' being equal to the 'Commonwealth'.

What is at issue is something more important than

¹ *Hansard*, House of Lords Debates, Vol. 152, Col. 753, 18 November 1947.

legalistic definitions, for behind the words lie realities and a desire, perhaps not possible of fulfilment when so much is changing, to make name and reality correspond. Does the new terminology succeed where the old failed? In reaffirming a clear-cut distinction between the self-governing members comprising the British Commonwealth of Nations and the non-self-governing territories comprising the Colonial Empire, the gain in lucidity is more than counterbalanced by the accentuation of a dividing line. There is a hint of exclusiveness about the distinctive designation for the privileged, autonomous States, but more to be regretted is the implication that the Commonwealth consists of two separate parts each going its own way to its own particular destination. That is neither wholly true nor helpful. It tends to accentuate a duality which Field-Marshal Smuts analysed in his self-styled 'explosive speech' delivered to the Empire Parliamentary Association in London on 25 November 1943. 'We are', he said:

an Empire and a Commonwealth. We are a dual system. In that dual system we follow two different principles. . . . In the Commonwealth this group of ours has become wholly decentralized as sovereign States. The members of the group maintain the unbreakable spiritual bonds which are stronger than steel, but in all matters of government and their internal and external concerns they are sovereign States. In the Colonial Empire, on the other hand, we follow quite a different principle. We follow the opposite principle of centralization. And centralization is focused in this country, in London. The question that arises in my own mind, looking at the situation objectively, is whether such a situation can endure. To have the Empire centralized and the Commonwealth decentralized, to have two groups developed on two different

lines, raises grave questions for the future. Is this duality in our group safe? Should we not give very grave thought to this dualism in our system?

How direct is the link between name and reality! For through all the changes in name is it not possible to detect a unifying link in the trend towards an ever greater degree of decentralization in Commonwealth affairs? And is not the emphasis on decentralization, which in the past half century has been a guiding principle in relations with the Dominions, likely now to find a new lease of life in the Colonial Empire, where economic and political development will demand regional groupings of the kind already emerging in East Africa and in the West Indies, and on which ever greater responsibilities will and must be devolved? For these reasons, while the new use of the word Commonwealth may be cordially welcomed, its sub-division into the British Commonwealth and Colonial Empire must be viewed with some reserve. 'The British Commonwealth', observed Professor Hancock,¹ 'is nothing less than the "nature" of the British Empire defined, in Aristotelian fashion, by its end', and the names 'British Empire' and 'British Commonwealth' 'jostle each other in a competition which is perhaps symbolical of the struggle between liberty and necessity, ideal and fact, aspiration and limiting condition—a struggle which is fought continuously in every creative society.' They permeate the whole structure, they can hardly be restricted to individual parts without creating many anomalies. Are the Imperialists of Toronto and Durban content that they should no longer be part of the British Empire?

Lest once more it should be thought that the precise designation of the Commonwealth is a matter of little substance, it is well to remember that those who wish to

¹ Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 61 and cf. also p. 488.

weigh the value of membership attach much importance to it, in the belief that the name reveals something of the predominant purposes of this community of nations and of the principles which inspire it. To them, therefore, the name has a symbolic significance. The Burmese Provisional Government and its Prime Minister, Thakin Nu, were prepared to contemplate continued association with the British Commonwealth in 1947 provided it were renamed the United Commonwealth of Nations. The Burmese mistrusted the implication of ownership in the adjective 'British'. This is a rather nice refinement. The word 'British' now implies, not ownership, but a way of life which is the way of life of the Commonwealth. But it is significant and understandable that the question of designation was raised as a matter of substance. And it has been answered, too late to affect the decision of Burma, in a way the Burmese could only have welcomed. The British Commonwealth of Nations is now the Commonwealth; and under a highly significant amendment to the British Nationality Bill of 1948, the terms 'British subject' and 'Commonwealth citizen' will henceforth become interchangeable. By the new dominions of Asia, by the peoples of the Colonial Empire, by all, indeed, who are not British by race, the alternative designation is likely to be preferred, for it removes not only any suggestion of ownership but also the outworn, if nominal, concept of subjection. At the same time for people of British descent the term 'British subject', which has always stood for a cherished tradition of kinship and allegiance to a common Crown, remains. This happy compromise is a notable recognition of the psychological needs of the free and equal partnership of peoples of many races and many nations in one Commonwealth.

Equally instructive has been the concern of the older

Dominions to assert in name as well as in fact their full autonomy. It is this that has led to the discarding of the prefix 'dominion'. 'Canada' has replaced 'the Dominion of Canada'. The phrase 'the Dominions' has itself become somewhat outdated. The relationship is individual, for Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa have well-established international personalities of their own coupled with a pardonable dislike of being lumped together indiscriminately.

The search for the most appropriate designation for the British Empire as a whole has had its counterpart in the questionings about the status and the precise meaning of the term 'dominion'.

In 1926 the Dominions were described as autonomous communities 'freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations'. In the minds of more advanced nationalists, of General Hertzog and of Mr Cosgrave, there remained lingering doubts as to whether full autonomy had in fact been achieved. How was the word 'autonomy' to be interpreted? Had a Dominion the right to secede? Could a Dominion remain neutral while Britain went to war and remain a Dominion? On the question of secession Mr Amery recalls that in 1926 he himself had misgivings about the interpretation of the phrase 'freely associated'. He felt that it might be taken to imply a right to dissociation from the Commonwealth but his colleagues unanimously held that it could refer only to 'the freedom with which our association is exercised, and could have no bearing on the question of allegiance to the Crown. Freedom to break away from that allegiance', Mr Amery states categorically, 'was certainly not intended to be sanctioned by the framers of the definition' . . .¹ But the issue in South Africa where it assumed major proportions,

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 131.

was not one of interpretation nor even of practical politics at that time, but of symbolic significance. The right to secede was regarded by nationalists as the test of full autonomy and was not necessarily related to a desire actually to secede. It was only when the principal protagonists joined hands in the Smuts-Hertzog coalition of 1933 that the controversy was stilled by the agreement to differ.¹ South African concern with secession had one lasting result; it created elsewhere, particularly in Asia, a belief that the right to secede was the culminating and final proof of full sovereignty within the Commonwealth. To that extent it was harmful to the Commonwealth, for not only did it give a very negative conception of what partnership in it involved, but, in addition, it fostered a psychological approach in which the distinction between a right to secede and actual secession was quickly lost to view.

Hand in hand with the right to secede went the equally vexed question of Dominion neutrality. It received a clear answer in the War of 1939-45. When the new constitution of Eire was adopted in 1937, the United Kingdom Government, with the concurrence of the oversea Dominions, stated that they would regard it as not affecting 'a fundamental alteration in the position of the Irish Free State'. That definition of policy has not been formally modified, and in 1948 Eire is still regarded, with qualifications which are not fundamental in character, as a Dominion. The precedent has therefore been established and the theoretical issue disposed of. From the viewpoint of political realities what happened in Cape Town in September 1939 was, however, of far greater significance than what took place in Dublin, just because South Africa in practice

¹ B. K. Long, *In Smuts' Camp* (London, Oxford University Press, 1945), pp. 34-39.

and in spirit was a Dominion in a sense in which the Irish Free State had never been.

On 4 September 1939, the Prime Minister of the Union, General Hertzog, proposed his motion in favour of neutrality. It was known that the issue hung in the balance and that the votes of waverers, ready to be influenced by the arguments of the two principal protagonists, Hertzog on the one hand and Smuts on the other, might decide the momentous issue of peace or war. Mr B. K. Long, a United Party member,¹ told how nearly it was decided by a speech of a front bench member of his own party, Mr Heaton Nicholls from Natal, in a sense quite opposite to that which the speaker intended. Mr Heaton Nicholls maintained that the Dominions were 'linked together by a common allegiance to the Crown; that is by an allegiance which all the States of the Commonwealth owe in common. You cannot', he said,

owe anything in common and claim a right to act separately. Allegiance, sir, means something more than a mere word to be bandied about on political platforms. It has a very deep, sacred significance—loyalty to the common Crown. In the eyes of every English-speaking man in this country, South Africa is at war; and it does not require any declaration by the Government of this country to determine whether we are at war or not at war. The full right to determine the extent of our participation in that war is admitted. . . . But there is no doubt about the technical position of this country. We are at war in the eyes of every British subject and if we are not at war we cannot be British subjects. . . .

This was the language of the past, the concepts of an earlier age fighting a last rearguard action well-nigh fatal

¹ B. K. Long, *op. cit.*, Chapter V. 'How We Went to War'.

to the cause it cherished. For the speech 'shocked and startled the House'. In the great issues of peace and war, had there been no advance since 1914? Did not the Dominions in fact enjoy the powers commonly held to be the final attribute of sovereignty? Were the interests of Britain to decide whether the Union of South Africa, of whose European population only some 40 per cent were of British extraction, should or should not go to war? These were disturbing questions which required immediate answers. They came spontaneously and appropriately from another English-speaking United Party member, Mr B. K. Long. He said bluntly that he did not agree with Mr Heaton Nicholls; that he was convinced that there 'was no limit to our freedom under the Statute of Westminster as confirmed in our country under the Status Act'; that South Africa 'had the right to declare our neutrality', but that 'it is disastrously unwise in the interests of our country that we should take this course of action which the Prime Minister proposes.' By this rejoinder Mr B. K. Long, in the opinion of those who heard the debate, stepped for a moment on to the page of history. Once reassured that there was no limitation or threat to its sovereign power, the South African Parliament considered the great question before it on its merits, and decided by a majority of 13 in a House of 153 members¹ that in the interests of South Africa war should be declared on Germany. Never was there a clearer vindication of the wisdom of the policy of decentralization and full Dominion autonomy, frankly accepted in all its implications within as well as without the Dominions. Nor has there been an episode in the recent history of the Commonwealth which indicates more clearly the psychology and the temper of dominion nationalism.

¹ Of this number 147 actually voted.

To think once more of secession and neutrality serves to remind one of how far the Commonwealth has moved in the last decade. About status none of the partners is any longer concerned. The relationship between the Dominions and the United Kingdom quietly evolved along the lines conceived by the drafters of the Statute of Westminster, and by the Imperial Conference, though the pace has been rather faster and the direction a little different to what was anticipated. The relationship has tended to become more and more informal. The Imperial Conference has been, temporarily at least, superseded by informal meetings of Dominion Prime Ministers. Consultation on an elaborate scale takes place between the partner-nations, but with the accent always on its informal character. The aim is not so much an agreed view as an exchange of view. All this may fairly be regarded as a sign of a great and growing intimacy among the member States. But it accords little with the old rather rigid view of the Mother Country and the Dominions. The Commonwealth is now an international partnership — 'the British Group of Nations' as Field-Marshal Smuts happily described it. Since the war the concept of Dominion status has been elaborated, reinterpreted and redefined, not by the formal enunciation of new principles, but more characteristically in order to meet practical and pressing needs.

In 1921, Dominion status, which Lloyd George so wisely and so resolutely refused to define, was embodied as the corner-stone of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; a quarter of a century later it was proposed in 1942 and used in 1947 to provide at least an interim solution for the handing over of power in India. On both occasions some definition could not be avoided, for India needed reassurance on the full and final character of the transfer of

sovereignty to the two successor States. What are the distinguishing features of a Dominion today? Are there any restrictions placed upon its power as a sovereign State? These are the questions with which Sir Stafford Cripps was confronted in New Delhi in the Spring of 1942. The Draft Declaration of His Majesty's Government contemplated 'the earliest possible realization of self-government in India' and proposed the creation of a new Indian Union 'which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs'. It was the task of Sir Stafford Cripps both to convince Indian opinion that the offer was genuine, and to remove the prevailing doubt lest Dominion status should not mean full independence for India. To fulfil it effectively he took a step, then unprecedented for a British Cabinet Minister, of holding Press Conferences at which Indian journalists were encouraged to ask the most detailed and searching questions. The answers given by Sir Stafford Cripps, speaking with full authority as a member of the War Cabinet, define at least the more negative aspects of Dominion status categorically, and some may usefully be quoted:¹

Will the Indian Union be entitled to disown its allegiance to the Crown?

Yes. In order that there should be no possibility of doubt, we have inserted in the last sentence of paragraph (c) (ii) the statement: 'but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relation to the other Member States of the British Commonwealth.' The Dominion will be

¹ A full record is to be found in *The Cripps Mission*, by Professor R. Coupland (Oxford University Press, 1942).

completely free either to remain within or to go without the Commonwealth of Nations.

Will the Indian Union have the right to enter into a treaty with any other nation in the world?

Yes.

Can the Union join any contiguous foreign countries?

There is nothing to prevent it. Canada can join the U.S.A. to-morrow if it wants to.

Can it?

Of course it can.

What about the Governor-General?

The constitution-making body will be free to deal with that question as it chooses. . .

Can you tell us clearly what you are going to give us? What is required is one simple word, 'freedom'.

We used what we thought simple: 'full self-government.' We followed it by a definition which we believed would convey the right meaning. There is no conceivable doubt that this allows complete and absolute self-determination and self-government for India.

Five years after the failure of the Cripps mission the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, was confronted by very similar questions when, in New Delhi on 4 June 1947, he explained his proposals for the transfer of power. To these questions he answered by saying once again that 'Dominion status' and 'full independence' were synonymous terms. In accepting Dominion status as an interim solution neither the Union of India nor Pakistan were suffering any diminution in their sovereignty. The final right to decide how long they wished to remain Dominions rested with them. On this point the Prime Minister was equally categorical in London. He said in the House that the transfer of power on the basis of Dominion status to one or two successor authorities would be 'without

prejudice to the right of the Indian Constituent Assemblies to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they have authority will remain within the British Commonwealth.¹ Whether this statement disposed of the now rather academic question of secession is arguable. Secession of an Indian dominion is by consent and creates no precedent for unilateral secession. But to speak of unilateral secession has become unrealistic since it is the declared policy of the United Kingdom Government, given practical effect in Burma, that 'we want no unwilling partners in the Commonwealth'. Therefore if it is the considered wish of a member State to secede, it would presumably be the policy of the United Kingdom Government to agree to the necessary severance of the constitutional ties that bind the members of the Commonwealth together.

The member States of the Commonwealth should not, and for the most part, do not, think in terms of the right to secede. The whole assumption on which the Commonwealth rests is that it is a friendly partnership of equals working together for the common good. And it is not only a friendly but also a lasting partnership. If it were not, policy and planning, whether economic, political or strategic, would be rendered meaningless. From this point of view it is possible to question the wisdom of using Dominion status as an interim status in India or elsewhere, thereby incurring the risk both of lowering its prestige and, more important, of giving an impression that it may legitimately be regarded as a casual, as distinct from a lasting, association. There is the very real risk lest in Asia and in Africa the widespread impression should be confirmed that Dominion status is a milestone on the road of a colonial people to independence, but not its end.

¹ *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 438, Col. 40, 3 June 1947.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMONWEALTH TODAY

What happened in Burma lends substance to these misgivings.

There was something profoundly disturbing in the decision of Burma to sever all links with the Commonwealth, which was not mitigated but much enhanced by the fact that the parting was most friendly. Thakin Nu, the Burmese Prime Minister, declared: 'What both sides have sought, and I believe have achieved, is nothing less than arrangements which will form a firm and solid basis for Anglo-Burmese friendship.' Lord Listowel, Secretary of State for Burma, moving the Second Reading of the Burma Independence Bill in the House of Lords, for his part confirmed what Thakin Nu had said, first explaining the conditions of Commonwealth membership:

'We do not regard membership of the Commonwealth as something to be thrust by force upon a reluctant people, but as a priceless privilege granted only to those who deeply desire it and are conscious of its obligations as well as of its advantages. The essence of the Commonwealth relationship is that it is a free association of nations, with a common purpose, who belong together because they have decided of their own volition to give and to take their fair share in a world-wide partnership.'

And then he added, 'It should not be supposed that the decision of Burma to leave the Commonwealth is due to a lack of good will towards us—the Treaty arrangements make this perfectly clear. . . .'¹

From all this it can only be deduced—and there is other evidence to support the correctness of the deduction—that Dominion status largely for psychological reasons had no attractions for the Burmese. As a Dominion she felt

¹ *Hansard*, House of Lords Debates, Vol. 152, Col. 855, 25 November 1947.

she had no natural place in the Commonwealth. That is one factor which deserves more sympathetic reflection than it has so far received. Is the accepted pattern of Commonwealth relationships well suited to the more nationally self-conscious peoples of Asia? An even wider issue is raised by the conclusion of a former member of the Commonwealth that 'a firm and solid basis for friendship' is only to be found outside it. If Britain and Burma had parted on unfriendly terms the latter's secession from the Commonwealth would be understandable indeed. But that a friendly Burma should take that decision raises more far-reaching questions. It would seem to imply a misunderstanding of the nature of the Commonwealth. How far this was recognized in London is not clear. Certainly it was surprising that no member of the Dominions Office was appointed to the United Kingdom High Commissioner's Offices in Rangoon or for that matter in New Delhi, or Karachi, when these offices were first established. At a moment when an intimate, first-hand knowledge of the conduct of relations with the Dominions both at home and overseas was supremely relevant, no one who had had long years of specialized experience in this field was available in any of these capitals. It was an oversight only to be explained on the assumption that the pattern and principles of intra-Commonwealth relations were sufficiently understood in Asian countries. That assumption was not well founded.

While Dominion status has been rejected by Burma and used in India as an interim solution, it has been welcomed in Ceylon as the foundation for a lasting relationship. It was in June 1947 that Mr Creech-Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, announced that as soon as practicable the constitution of Ceylon would be amended so as to confer upon the island 'fully responsible status within

the British Commonwealth of Nations'.¹ This status was subsequently defined as 'that full degree of self-government which the term "Dominion status" is generally held to imply'. In February 1948 the Ceylon Independence Act came into force, and for the first time a non-European people joined the number of the autonomous nations of the Commonwealth as a result of deliberate choice. It was indeed a momentous occasion. 'This is the first occasion', remarked Lord Addison, 'in which a colony, developing this system of self-government of its own accord, has deliberately sought to become a Dominion state in our Commonwealth . . . but we hope and expect that it will not be the last'.² The impression of orderly progress so notably absent when the Irish Free State, India, and Pakistan acquired Dominion status is given felicitous expression in the preamble to the Defence and External Affairs Agreements between the United Kingdom and Ceylon: 'Whereas Ceylon has reached the stage in constitutional development at which she is ready to assume the status of a fully responsible member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, in no way subordinate in any aspect of domestic or external affairs, freely associated and united by common allegiance to the Crown. . . .'³

The reliance now placed on discussion within the Commonwealth is given formal expression in the Agreement with Ceylon on External Affairs, in which both parties specifically agree to follow the accepted Commonwealth practice for the exchange of information and of consultation upon policy. More important in its implications is the Agreement on Defence. It embodies mutual guarantees for the defence 'of their territories' against

¹ *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 438, Cols. 2015-17, 18 June 1947.

² *ibid.*, House of Lords Debates, Vol. 152, Col. 1205, 4 December 1947.

³ Cmd. 7257, November 1947.

external aggression, and allows to the United Kingdom the right to base naval and air forces, and maintain such land forces, in Ceylon as may be required to provide security against aggression. Though not new in principle, so comprehensive a defence agreement does in practice afford a more clearly defined basis for co-operation, not merely in defence but also in foreign policy, than exists among the older Dominions. The foundations of Commonwealth co-operation, some part of the obligations each partner incurs, are here set out in a way that may well provide a useful and valuable precedent.

The tendency in the case of Ceylon to define the relationship with the Commonwealth in some respects more formally than those of the older Dominions, suggests that the existing practice evolving from a very different background is hardly suited without any modification to the different problems of the Asian Dominions. Mr Jinnah, the Governor-General of Pakistan, said in December 1947 that, while it was his personal opinion that the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan would decide that Pakistan would wish to stay in the Commonwealth, he felt that Great Britain should exercise her great moral responsibility as the senior member of the Commonwealth more actively than she did at the present time. In the forefront of his mind was the prevailing tension between India and Pakistan, in which any active mediation by Britain was bound to present the most formidable difficulties, but it may well prove in practice that the addition of new Dominions will demand a different approach towards some aspects of Commonwealth relations. Reliance upon a rather leisurely process of discussion, well suited and wholly congenial to a long established partnership, may not meet the needs, psychological as well as practical, of the newer members. Southern Asia is an area

profoundly affected by the aftermath of war, and passing through a revolutionary epoch in which the active stabilizing influence that the Commonwealth could exercise might contribute far more to meeting the needs of the Asian Dominions than a studiously marked adherence to established procedure. It may be that this is a case that calls for a new departure—in many respects it would be surprising if it did not.

The changes in Commonwealth relations after the Second World War have attracted much less public attention than those which took place after the First. 'The British Empire of 1926' wrote Sir Alfred Zimmern,¹ 'is not the British Empire of 1914. It is something new—how new neither the outside world nor even its own citizens have yet adequately realized'. But even though one would not speak in such emphatic terms about the changes that have taken place between 1939 and 1948, they are hardly less momentous. It is because they are for the most part changes in outlook and in political practice, and not in constitutional form, that their significance is easily overlooked. In the last two years the increase in the number of the Dominions listed in the Statute of Westminster by the addition of three Asian Dominions has thrown into fresh relief the multi-national foundation of the Commonwealth. But it is not this wider background, remarkable though it is, but the change in the political as distinct from the legal or formal concept of a Dominion and of the relations between them, that most deserves attention.

The ideal of the Commonwealth remains the government of men by themselves, and its problems, however they may be restated in the light of contemporary needs, remain those of reconciling liberty with organization, individuality with the sense of community. The Common-

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 2.

wealth is a loose association of autonomous States, whose members are bound together by certain conventional understandings and united formally by common allegiance to the Crown and informally, despite different backgrounds, by a common outlook and common ideals of freedom. If all its members remain very conscious that they are separate entities, deriving their distinctive, individual characters from their own particular historical evolution, most remain none the less equally aware that together they make up the Commonwealth. At times, attention is concentrated on the underlying unity of purpose, on the sense of community, at others, on the separateness of the component parts.

The War of 1939-45 repeated the paradox of the earlier War of 1914-18. In both cases close and intimate co-operation in resistance to a common enemy preceded a renewed emphasis upon separate responsibility and national interest. Yet implicit in the Commonwealth of Nations is a philosophy of social obligation. Individual right, national right, has its all-important and recognized place.¹ But it has to be balanced and is balanced by a sense of obligation. It is that sense of obligation that somehow or other continues to elude a definition satisfying to all the members of the Commonwealth. The records² of the unofficial British Commonwealth Relations Conference, held early in 1945, reflect faithfully a general reluctance to try to remedy this deficiency. Delegates from all parts of the Commonwealth were content to speak of their common sense of purpose; of the ideals which bind the Commonwealth together; and of the way

¹ cf. Hancock, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 503.

² *The British Commonwealth and World Society* (Proceedings of the Third Unofficial Conference on British Commonwealth Relations, London, 1945). Edited by Richard Frost. (Oxford University Press, issued under the auspices of the R.I.I.A., 1947).

of life common to all its members. But having said so much—or rather so little—the delegates turned as quickly as possible to the more congenial tasks of considering particular problems of defence, foreign and economic policies. It may well be now that the balance is in danger of becoming tilted too far in favour of the practical, though few will regret that those bleak, unprofitable discussions about neutrality; about secession; about symbolism, which so vexed the members of the Commonwealth in the inter-war years, have ceased to be practical issues. Equality of status may now be assumed, though many of its implications remain to be worked out.

If one were asked to pick out the essential feature of the Commonwealth system in these post-war years, one would not go far wrong in saying, 'faith in discussion'. The Commonwealth of Nations has no common foreign, economic, or defence policy, nor indeed does it aspire to one. It places its reliance upon an elaborate machinery of consultation and not in 'one voice'. In almost all the great issues with which the Commonwealth has been confronted in all the great crises of its recent history, the member States have, for the most part, thought alike, because against a background of common interests and common ideals discussion usually produces a coincidence of view.

Discussion is one of the essentials, perhaps the great essential, of democracy.¹ It is certain that without free discussion there cannot be a true democracy. By that test, the British Commonwealth of Nations is an international democracy. It relies upon discussion. If at a meeting the discussion is fruitful, there should emerge from it a view to which all have contributed and which reflects the sense of the meeting as a whole. That sense of the meeting is

¹ cf. A. D. Lindsay, *The Essentials of Democracy* (London, Oxford University Press, 1929), Lecture III.

something more and something better than the individual opinion of any member who took part in the discussion. In the same way discussion, both official and unofficial, within the British Commonwealth should produce a view or a policy better than that first propounded by any of the individual partners. To what extent it does must be considered later.

Dependence on discussion carries certain implications. It involves a willingness to consider every problem that arises on its merits and, equally with that, a distaste for any rigid policy either imposed from above or agreed in advance. The member States of the British Commonwealth tend like Cardinal Newman to say at any given moment, 'I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me.'

What we are witnessing in the world today is a climax of the development foretold some forty years ago by Lord Salisbury, when he said that the outstanding feature of the modern world was that the great Powers were becoming greater, and the small Powers counting for less and less. This is a development the Commonwealth as a whole recognizes but does not welcome. It is a development necessarily uncongenial to an international democracy which has placed its faith in discussion, not in force. The Dominions individually may be middle Powers, they are not great Powers. Is even Britain without the support of the Commonwealth a great Power in the sense in which that term has to be accepted today? That is a question which weighs on many minds. Judged by material standards the answer is clearly in the negative. But whether this sort of self-conscious questioning is very profitable is another matter. In the sixteenth century the material and human resources of England were not equal to those of Spain; in the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries they were not equal to those of the France of Louis XIV or of Napoleon; in the nineteenth century they were not equal to those of the Russia of Alexander I or the Germany of Bismarck and the Kaiser. The lesson of 1940 is surely that the acceptance of material resources as the final criterion in the measurement of power is no reliable guide. When it was said in New York to Field-Marshal Smuts that the British Group was not the equal of the remaining two Great Powers in war potential, he replied, 'Its contribution in human qualities of balance and moderation, good sense, good humour and fair play, moral purpose and outlook is of a very special character. They are worth more than scores of divisions and without them divisions must ultimately fail'. It is well to be reminded of that. Moreover, even in the fields of actual and potential resources the relative strength of the Commonwealth is easily underestimated. If, as a result of the war, Britain has been materially weakened and become more vulnerable to new weapons, the oversea Dominions, particularly Canada and Australia, have been notably strengthened. Within the Commonwealth there has been a redistribution of power and there is no reason to assume that the strength of the whole has been thereby weakened. And as a result of the war, the United States of America and the member Nations of the Commonwealth have been drawn closer together than at any time in their history. Seventy years ago, Bismarck said the most important thing in the modern world was the fact that the people of the United States spoke English. The truth of his statement is being realized today, and it will profoundly influence the future pattern of the Commonwealth.

II

BRITAIN AND THE DOMINIONS

Consultation and Co-operation in Foreign Policy

THE self-governing Dominions today, in whose number the United Kingdom is to be included, are sovereign States, wholly responsible for their own foreign and defence policies. They are also partners in a Commonwealth of Nations, and the policies which each individually determines always should be and usually are framed with due regard for the interest and the welfare of the others, and of the group as a whole. But the Commonwealth is not an organization having a foreign policy of its own; its members are not bound together by any formal alliance or obligation to act in concert. They place their reliance deliberately, not upon formulated or rigid agreement, but upon the existence of a common sense of purpose and acceptance of a common scale of values. This may seem in theory and sometimes in practice, an unreliable foundation on which to build, but it has been tested, severely tested, and it has survived the challenge of two world wars unimpaired. It is a foundation that owes the stability it undoubtedly possesses to the fact that it is built upon political realities.

Dominion responsibility in foreign policy has roots deep in the past. In the later nineteenth century in all matters which directly concerned the interests of colonial governments, consultation was recognized to be both right and

proper, even if not a formally established practice. As early as 1884 the reliance placed upon the opinion of the Cape Government by London had aroused the indignation of Bismarck. The occasion was provided by German inquiries about the protection of German traders at Angra Pequena; inquiries soon to be elaborated into successful claims for the occupation of what was later German South-West Africa. To the German Ambassador in London the Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, explained that the inordinate delay in replying to these inquiries arose from the fact that the British Government could not act 'except in agreement with the Government of the Colony, which has an independent ministry and parliament'. On this Bismarck commented: 'that is untrue and does not concern us; if it were true, we should have to maintain a legation with these British Colonial Governments.' When the German Ambassador returned to the charge, dissatisfied with the excuses given, Granville replied that while the negotiations had moved slowly, that happened 'owing to the independent position of our Colonies which we cannot get over, with the best will in the world'.¹ In speaking of legations to be accredited to Colonial Governments, Bismarck had hit upon the underlying truth in a situation which took some forty years to crystallize. What the Foreign Secretary had said amounted to an oblique admission that these internally self-governing territories were taking the first step on the road to acquiring a distinct international personality with the full agreement of the Imperial Government.

Control over their own defence policies has been an essential condition of the separate identity of the Domin-

¹ *Die Grosse Politik*, Vol. IV, p. 63; English translation, E. T. S. Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914*, Vol. I (London, Methuen, 1930), pp. 177-8.

ions in foreign policy. That condition was recognized by implication in the Report of the Colonial Conference of 1907, which stated that the newly established General Staff, 'a purely advisory organization of which command is not a function', to quote Lord Haldane's description of it, should be at the disposal of 'the various national organizations within the Empire.' Of the principles of Imperial Defence Lord Haldane said: 'We know this thing must be founded simply upon the attaining of a common purpose, the fulfilment of a common end. It cannot be by the imposing of restrictions or by rigid plans which might not suit the idiosyncracies of particular countries.' This language revealed at once insight into the direction of Dominion development and an understanding welcome of it.¹ Corroborative evidence of growing Dominion influence in defence policy at this time is provided in a memorandum sent in 1914 by Prince von Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador in London, to the German Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg. The dispatch was written just before the visit of King George V and Sir Edward Grey to Paris, and the German Foreign Office were much concerned at that time about the possibility of the tightening of the *Entente*, and of its transformation into a definitive military alliance of the kind which both the French and Russian Governments would have welcomed. The German Ambassador was at pains to make it clear that these misgivings were in fact without foundation, and he reported that he understood that the Foreign Office felt that an alliance with France was impossible on many grounds, one of these being that the Dominions would not approve of it. 'Most continental critics', wrote the Ambassador 'forgot entirely that not England alone but also the entire British world-Empire had a word to say in

¹ cf. W. K. Hancock, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 44-45.

military and naval matters, and that the British Cabinet had to pay much consideration to the wishes and the needs of the Dominions.' The German Ambassador did not question the correctness of this Foreign Office opinion, merely confining himself to the comment that 'further use might be made of it.'¹

It was in 1919 that the pattern of the many States composing one society was firmly traced, and received, not without questioning, tacit international sanction at the Peace Conference of 1919. The separate identity of the Dominions was then underlined by the procedure for the signature of the Peace Treaties, when, characteristically of this phase of transition in Empire relationships, each Dominion plenipotentiary affixed his signature on behalf of his own Government, while the plenipotentiaries of the United Kingdom signed on behalf of the whole British Empire. But any who deduced from this procedure that the war had superimposed upon the separate foreign policies of member States of the Commonwealth a unified foreign policy for which all shared responsibility, were quickly undeceived by the events of post-war years. The most convincing evidence was forthcoming at Locarno in 1925. In that Treaty it was explicitly recorded that the military guarantees on which it was based imposed 'no obligation upon any of the British Dominions or upon India unless the Government of such Dominion or of India signifies its acceptance thereof.' In the event none were willing to underwrite the obligation. The separate responsibility of the Dominions for their own foreign policy had become an established fact, though the procedure by way of a general Treaty with exceptions, clearly implied, as Professor Berriedale Keith pointed out, that the United

¹ *Die Grosse Politik*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 539; English translation, E. T. S. Dugdale, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 359-60.

Kingdom Government still had power to bind the Dominions by the signature of its representatives alone.¹

Even a reminder of one or two incidents in the growth of separate Dominion responsibility in the field of foreign policy makes it abundantly clear that this too was a gradual development endorsed, but not a new departure enunciated, by the Imperial Conference of 1926. If the Report of the Conference as a whole is rightly regarded as an accurate reflection of how the Commonwealth system worked at that time, of no part of it is this more true than the sentence which stated that 'the governing consideration underlying all discussion' of separate responsibility in foreign policy 'must be that neither Great Britain nor the Dominions could be committed to any active obligations except with the definite assent of their own Governments'. But that does not in any way lessen its far-reaching practical implications. Formal recognition is always an important phase in institutional development.

The conclusions of the 1926 Conference on individual responsibility for foreign policy followed naturally from the definition of the Dominions as 'autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs . . .'. 'Equality of status so far as Great Britain and the Dominions are concerned is thus the root principle governing our inter-imperial relations'. But equality of status did not and could not at that stage in the history of the Commonwealth imply equality of function. In the field of foreign policy and of defence, the resources, the geographical position, the history of the United Kingdom meant that the main burden must rest on her; at any rate for many years to come. But in the

¹ Berriedale Keith, *The Dominions as Sovereign States* (London, Macmillan, 1938), p. 22.

discharge of her continuing responsibilities the United Kingdom acts not on the joint responsibility of the Commonwealth countries, but on her own, assumed, however, if time allows, with full knowledge of Dominion points of view. It is on just this point that critics of the recent evolutionary trend in Commonwealth relations express their most profound misgivings. What justification exists for them?

The Conference of 1926 expressed the confident belief that while each Dominion must remain the sole judge of the nature and extent of its co-operation, no common cause would be thereby imperilled. On what was this confidence based? If each Dominion decided its own foreign policy in the light of its own interests, how was it that such confidence was felt about the support for the common cause? How was a common cause to be defined, to be recognized and to evoke a common response from the widely scattered nations of the Commonwealth? The answers—and they have no air of finality about them—are to be sought in the elaborate, though characteristically informal, machinery of Commonwealth consultation, built upon the indispensable foundation of a common sense of values and a united devotion to the cause of peace. This machinery of consultation, which is of such profound importance in the co-ordination of the foreign policy of the member States of the Commonwealth, has evolved by rapid stages since 1926. More particularly during the 1939–45 War years, the system was extended to meet the unexampled strain to which it was then subjected. How does it work today?

The purpose of consultation is to keep all members of the Commonwealth fully informed about their respective foreign policies. In actual fact, however, the main flow of information still goes out from London. The United

Kingdom, one of the three Great Powers and a permanent member of the Security Council, with traditional interests and intimate contacts in every capital in Europe, with a Diplomatic Service which has its representatives in every country of the world, remains the principal source of information on developments in foreign countries. But the pattern is being modified as the Dominions rapidly enlarge their diplomatic representation, for that will enable them to make a very material contribution in the field of foreign policy, framed in the light of the advice of their own oversea representatives. At the time of writing Canada is represented in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, France, Greece, Luxemburg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, U.S.S.R., United States and Yugoslavia; Australia in Brazil, China, France, the Netherlands, United States, U.S.S.R. and Chile. Both have High Commissioners in all the Dominion capitals as well. In time, wide Dominion oversea representation should bring into being, what does not exist at present, an effective system of multi-lateral consultation.

In London the Commonwealth Relations Office (formerly the Dominions Office) is the mainspring of the machinery of consultation. It is its duty to give as much background information as possible about policies and developments in foreign countries to the Dominion Departments of External Affairs. More particularly, it is its aim to inform the Dominion Governments when policy is in its early and formative stage, for the earlier the information is passed to the Dominion Governments the greater the opportunities of working out a common and agreed policy. 'Every day', remarked Lord Cranborne, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in 1945, 'sheaves of telegrams go out from the Dominions office on all and every subject of mutual interest—foreign affairs,

economic developments, military co-operation, even domestic issues here which are likely to interest our partners. We tell them everything we can and we consult them on every point that arises of any importance in the international field.¹ Foreign Office telegrams received from, and sent to, diplomatic posts abroad constitute the raw material of the information on international affairs sent out to Dominion Governments. The department of the Foreign Office known as the Commonwealth Liaison Department sorts these telegrams, on an average 133 per day, for the express purpose of ensuring that the Commonwealth countries are kept fully informed on all questions likely to be of interest to them. Its duties are editorial in character, and it works in association with the appropriate department of the Commonwealth Relations Office, which dispatches to the Commonwealth Governments concerned the information derived from the Foreign Office telegrams, arranged and digested by the Commonwealth Liaison Department in consultation with the appropriate political departments of the Foreign Office and with the Commonwealth Relations Office. In this way every fragment of information likely to be of interest or of use which comes from the United Kingdom representatives in foreign countries is passed on immediately to the Dominion Governments. The volume of such communications is noteworthy. The number of telegrams alone handled by the Dominions Office in 1946 was over 23,000.² Speed in transmission is a matter of cardinal importance. That in the hectic conditions of war-time it

¹ From a speech of 19 February 1945, reprinted in *The British Commonwealth and World Society* (Proceedings of the Third Unofficial Conference on British Commonwealth Relations, London, 1945). Edited by Richard Frost (Oxford University Press, issued under the auspices of the R.I.I.A., 1947), p. 166.

² Article in *Labour Year Book*, 1946-47. Research Department of the Labour Party (London, Transport House, 1947).

was not always adequate, Lord Cranborne admitted, and inevitably the greater the urgency, the greater normally is the issue at stake. On more than one occasion during the war a Dominion Government felt that it had been committed implicitly to a course of action in a matter of vital concern to it without any adequate opportunity of expressing a considered opinion. Even in peace-time there have been occasions when the apparent need for an immediate decision made consultation with the Dominions difficult or impossible. The guarantees to Poland and Roumania in 1939 were notable instances when time was insufficient for any prior consultation with the Dominions, profoundly concerned though they were with the consequences, even though assuming no direct degree of responsibility. For the most part the failures to consult have been due to circumstances over which the United Kingdom Government has had no control, but at times defects in the machinery of consultation have been responsible. That the aim of all Commonwealth Governments should be to take no independent action in a matter of common concern until every effort has been made to achieve the common view, is a matter of vital principle. This is what Lord Cranborne had in mind in saying: 'as we make our guiding principle "consultation and yet more consultation" we shall not go far wrong.'¹

Consultation to be effective must be active. When a Commonwealth Government is consulted, prompt and careful consideration of the issue involved is required; otherwise the whole system will be deprived of its source of vitality. And there perhaps lies the greatest danger to the effectiveness of a system on which so much now depends. It is passivity against which all must be on guard.

A Dominion Government, to take the most usual

¹ *ibid*, p. 167.

example, is made aware of the line the United Kingdom Government proposes to take in particular circumstances; it is then in a position to record its own views, framed in many cases now in the light of independent reports from its own representatives, and in so doing, if it wishes, to express disagreement with the course of action contemplated by the United Kingdom Government. But on a great many occasions the information on foreign affairs passed from one Commonwealth Government to another is not thought to require either action or comment. Its value none the less remains, even if its immediate bearing on policy is slight, for it helps to build a picture of the background to developments, problems, and tensions in the foreign field throughout the world. Silence—and this is important—is not equivalent to assent, and in every case, whatever the views expressed, unless a Dominion Government wishes explicitly and formally to record its agreement the policy remains that of the United Kingdom Government alone. At the same time, when action is called for in the international field, knowledge of background, supplemented in many cases by preliminary interchange of view, makes it more probable that an agreed conclusion will have emerged. Even if this is not so, there will be full understanding of why a particular course of action has been adopted. That always has its value.

The allocation of responsibility for decisions on any issue made after discussion among the member States of the Commonwealth was well illustrated in the debate in the House of Commons in May 1946, on the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt. On 24 May Mr Bevin, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, recalled that none of the Dominion Governments had committed themselves to the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. They had been

consulted, they had raised no objections, but they had not endorsed the terms of the Treaty. When the United Kingdom Government felt that the time had come to negotiate a new Treaty 'almost every document' that was relevant had been sent to the Dominion Governments and they had been asked for their opinions. Discussion had followed but not decision. In no instance, remarked Mr Bevin, could he remember any specific case of a treaty, or the termination of a treaty, or a change in a treaty, in which a formal decision had been recorded by the Dominions. What was asked for was an opinion, and having heard it the United Kingdom Government came to a decision on its own responsibility.¹

A detailed account of the procedure adopted in 1946 was given by the Prime Minister. As he himself later confessed, he was 'led away in the course of debate' on the revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty into saying that the Dominions had 'agreed' that the Government's method of approach to this question was best. This statement he later withdrew. 'I should like,' he said in so doing,

to take this opportunity of making clear the nature and purpose of our consultation with the Dominions in matters of this kind. It is our practice and duty as members of the British Commonwealth to keep other members of the Commonwealth fully and continuously informed of all matters which we are called upon to decide, that may effect Commonwealth interests. The object is to give them the opportunity of expressing their views if they so desire. These views are taken fully into account but the decision must be ours, and other Governments are not asked, and would not wish, to share the responsibility for it. Dominion Governments follow the same practice.

¹ *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 423, Cols. 789, 790, 24 May 1946.

Mr Attlee added that in the circumstances it was obviously not possible for him to disclose the opinions expressed by the Dominion Governments. It was made clear, however, in a comment by Mr Mackenzie King that Canada not only was not a party to the decision that had been taken, but had in fact offered no advice on any aspect of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations.

From the debate on the revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, and Mr Attlee's significant statement on the procedure followed in intra-Commonwealth consultation—a statement which carried the approval of the Dominion Governments—two conclusions may be drawn. On the one hand consultation in no way weakens individual responsibility. It may promote a better understanding of the issues involved in any particular case; it should certainly bring out any aspects of interest to one or more of the Commonwealth countries, but in no way does it detract from the responsibility of the Government primarily concerned. On the other hand, there clearly exist occasions on which a decision should not be taken without a very particular effort to secure beforehand the assent of all the members of the Commonwealth. In war-time great strategic decisions fall into this category, in peace-time its definition is more difficult. But Mr Attlee specifically acknowledged its existence, though even so far-reaching a decision as that of withdrawing British troops from Egypt did not fall within it. Should circumstances make both desirable and acceptable a closer co-operation among the countries of the Commonwealth, the wider interpretation of matters falling within this category might well prove to be the right answer. It would require no new machinery nor even a recognizable modification in procedure but simply a tacit readjustment in classification.

The Prime Minister's authoritative definition of the already well-known procedure for intra-Commonwealth consultation prompts another and rather different reflection. The foreign policy of the United Kingdom, framed rightly and properly in the light of the views of the Dominion Governments, must be formulated slowly in order to allow time for consultation. It is indeed one of the ironies of our age that the speed of communications has slowed down decision. A Foreign Secretary today must delay his decision to an extent which Castlereagh or Canning or Palmerston would have deemed intolerable. Nor is it to be supposed that the restrictions upon prompt action—which is not, be it said, a synonym for effective action—arise solely from the need to consult all the Commonwealth Governments. A contributory factor is the growing tendency to reduce the discretionary authority of the accredited representatives. The freedom of action allowed to a High Commissioner in any matter of policy, with rare exceptions, is very slight. He is becoming more and more an intermediary rather than a representative. That, too, slows down the working of a machine overloaded with consultation on trivial and important issues alike. But fundamentally, however desirable it may be for the United Kingdom to respond quickly to developments in international affairs, it is infinitely more important that she should not act, unless action is imperative, without having ascertained the views of her partners. Any sacrifice in time is far more than counterbalanced by the benefit of Dominion advice, and, where possible, of Dominion co-operation. The machinery may tend to produce a considered response rather than a quick initiative. It makes a bold aggressive stroke in diplomacy almost impracticable. It is hardly conceivable that all the Dominion Governments would be prepared to depart

from a judicious middle of the road policy at the same time! But this is a case where the influence of the mechanism does no more than reinforce the inclinations of temperament.

The normal channel of intra-Commonwealth consultation is from Government to Government, but in matters of exceptional importance the correspondence passes between Prime Minister and Prime Minister. But, whatever the level, correspondence in itself would be inadequate. Each of the Dominions is represented by a High Commissioner in London. During the war daily meetings were held in the Dominions Office between the Secretary of State for the Dominions and the High Commissioners. The proceedings were informal and afforded a welcome opportunity for the discussion of all aspects of United Kingdom and Dominion policy. The Foreign Office was normally represented by the Minister of State. There have been many tributes to the value of these war-time meetings, and since the war they have been continued at fairly frequent intervals so that common problems may still be discussed frankly and informally round the table. Likewise, in each of the Dominion capitals there is a United Kingdom High Commissioner, and in most cases now a High Commissioner representing each of the other Dominions as well. This means that the personal contacts in London may find their parallel in similar personal contacts in all capitals of the Commonwealth. The pattern varies to meet particular needs, and the flexibility of the system of personal consultation was shown in many ways during the war years. One notable illustration was provided by the appointment in 1941 of Sir Earle Page, and subsequently of Mr Stanley Bruce (now Lord Bruce), as special Australian envoy to the War Cabinet. These appointments were made on the initiative of the Australian

Government, and though the other Dominion Governments did not themselves feel disposed to ask for similar representation, that constituted no objection to this one appointment, particularly desired by the Australian Government in view of the Japanese threat in the Pacific.

The pattern of imperial consultation is completed on the informal side by meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, and on a more formal basis by imperial conferences. The imperial conference requires elaborate organization, detailed agenda, and a large delegation from each of the Dominions to discuss fully all the technical points which may come up for consideration. It may be largely for this reason that no imperial conference has been held since 1937. The war and subsequent difficulties in communications and pressure on key manpower in all the Commonwealth countries have provided a strong practical argument against the holding of a further imperial conference at the present time. But practical objections, however well founded, may conceal, more than they reveal, the truth. It may be that the general trend of Commonwealth relations is towards an ever greater degree of informality, and that therefore in the future imperial conferences will not be so frequent as in the past. Moreover, it is far from clear that they would provide an ideal setting for the discussion of the problems that confront the Commonwealth today. The phase of institutional development, for which the imperial conference was so admirably suited, is drawing to a close, and as interest shifts to other fields the continued usefulness of so formal, so public, so large a gathering may legitimately be questioned. This is particularly the case while consideration of foreign policy and defence remains predominant.

The meetings of the Dominion Prime Ministers or their representatives is in one sense an informal substitute for an

imperial conference, but it is more realistic to judge them on their own merits, and in the light of the distinctive contribution which they can make. The two most recent Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meetings were held in London in the spring of 1944, before the war was over, and in the spring of 1946, after victory had been won¹; while Commonwealth Conference was held in Canberra, in 1947, for the specific purpose of considering the terms of the Japanese Peace Treaty, and the settlement in the Far East generally. At the Prime Ministers' meetings in London, the informality of the procedure was consistently emphasized; there was no fixed agenda, and it was not the aim of the meetings to reach concrete conclusions about particular subjects. They were wholly devoted to an informal exchange of view. Their value was, therefore, not to be assessed in the light of the practical decisions made, but by the measure of broad agreement, particularly in the field of foreign policy, that was reached. Informal meetings of this kind provide a very useful opportunity for reviewing problems of foreign policy in such a way that each member of the Commonwealth may learn what his partners feel about them. At the Conference of 1946 the Foreign Secretary, Mr Bevin, returned on two occasions from the Paris Peace Conference, which was taking place simultaneously, for the dual purpose of letting the Dominion representatives know what was going on at Paris and, equally important, of learning himself what they thought about the post-war settlement in Europe. Looking at the discussions as a whole, it is clear that their value was dependent upon a background of common knowledge and preliminary exchange of view by correspondence. The machinery of consultation, written and verbal, must be a unity if it is to work successfully.

¹ A further Conference has been arranged for October 1948.

The very marked advance in the international status of the Dominions since the war has placed a great and growing burden upon the machinery of intra-imperial consultation. The activity of the Dominions in foreign affairs; their rapidly increasing representation in foreign capitals; their distinctive and often forceful contribution at the post-war conferences, have all made the elaborate background of information and interchange of views an asset of exceptional importance to them. But equally, the experience of the post-war years has made it abundantly clear that consultation does not produce any identity of view or approach. Is that a weakness? Is it reasonable to suppose that the eight autonomous countries comprising the British Group of Nations, situated in different continents and having their policy determined to no small extent by regional considerations, could attain agreement on all issues merely by a process of consultation? And is it desirable that such agreement should be their over-riding aim?

The 1946 Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers clearly considered the answer to be in the negative. The Conference was officially described as an 'informal exchange of views', and throughout its proceedings characteristic emphasis was placed on the need to avoid any impression that the purpose of the Conference was to make 'decisions' or to reach 'agreement'. The talks were said to 'have contributed greatly to the elucidation of many problems' and to a 'mutual understanding of the issues involved'. Their range was evidently wide, for it is recorded that among the subjects on which 'views were exchanged' were the draft treaties with the satellite powers in Europe; the treaty with Germany, co-operation in the South Pacific and South-East Asia; and 'security responsibilities and arrangements for liaison on military

affairs between British Commonwealth Governments.’¹ Lest the language of the communiqué might provoke an incredulous or sceptical smile among those uninitiated in the ways of intra-Commonwealth consultation, there followed an emphatic and impressive reiteration of faith in their excellence. ‘The existing methods of consultation’, recorded the assembled Dominion representatives, ‘have proved their worth’. ‘They are peculiarly appropriate to the character of the British Commonwealth. . . .’ ‘While all are prepared to consider and adopt practical proposals for developing the existing system, it is agreed that the methods now practised are preferable to any centralized machinery.’ All this may be taken to mean that the high road of Commonwealth co-operation in foreign policy still leads in the direction which had been so clearly indicated by the great signposts of the past. If ever there was to be deflection or retracing of steps the day would surely have dawned when victory had been won after long and exacting struggles triumphantly endured. But formal agreement is not the goal; it is friendly co-operation, and, if need be, agreement to differ on all but fundamental issues.

Each of the Dominions by reason of its geographical position has particular regional interests. Australia and New Zealand are primarily concerned in the security and development of the South-West Pacific, but they are fully aware of the fact that this security depends in no small measure on the line of Imperial communications in the Mediterranean, where the Australian and New Zealand divisions fought so gallantly in both World Wars. It was awareness of this which was responsible for Australia’s forthright interest in the disposal of the former Italian colonies after the war. South Africa’s dominating concern

¹ *The Times*, 24 May 1946.

lies in the Mediterranean area. It is a matter of cardinal importance to the security of South Africa that no territorial settlement of the North African littoral should give a potentially hostile power a foothold on the African continent. Canada, more perhaps than any of the Dominions, has an immediate interest in the maintenance of peace in Europe. Over and above this, by reason of her geographical position, Canada's predominant concern is to ensure that both in war and in peace the United States and the United Kingdom keep in step in respect of the main objectives of their policy.

The widely different regional interests of the member States of the Commonwealth constitute a rigid barrier to easy, automatic acceptance of common policies. They also underline the Commonwealth's dependence on sea and air power and sea and air communications. It is sea power pre-eminently that unites into one co-ordinated whole the broad diffusion of interest, the difference of emphasis placed by each member of the Commonwealth on the several problems which concern them all in the post-war world. It is because of the dominant role of sea power in maintaining the safety and thereby making possible the underlying strategic unity of the Commonwealth that the sub-continent of India fills, as Dr Panikkar has so rightly emphasized,¹ a key geographical position. 'The essential fact', he observes,

is that India is a maritime State with a predominance of interest on the sea. . . . From the continental point of view of Eurasia she is only an abutting corner, walled off by impassable mountains. From the sea and air point of view she is, on the other hand, one of the great strategic centres. From the maritime point of view she

¹ K. M. Panikkar, *The Basis of Indo-British Treaty* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press for the Indian Council of World Affairs, 1946), pp. 4-11.

dominates the Indian Ocean. . . . She is the natural air transit centre of the maritime areas. To the maritime State system, India is invaluable. To the continental system, she is unimportant.

If peace and security in the Indian Ocean and in the South-West Pacific are of cardinal importance to the Union of India, her concern is shared in greater or less degree by all the members of the Commonwealth. It is that which makes the long-term relationship of India with the Commonwealth one of the crucial issues confronting it in the post-war world. How it is to be decided is a question affecting not merely strategic policy in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, important though that unquestionably is, but even more the possibility of a coherent sea and air defence policy for the maritime nations, including India herself. 'It requires', says Dr Panikkar, 'no strategic or other specialized knowledge to recognize that the Indian Ocean and naturally the areas washed by it are most vital to India's security. This has been so from time immemorial though the Central Asian bias of Delhi and the unchallenged mastery of England over the Seven Seas obscured it for a long time.'¹

This general picture of the United Kingdom and the oversea Dominions in the field of foreign affairs applies with certain important modifications to Eire, whose constitutional position is later considered separately. Though she does not fit easily into the conventional constitutional pattern of the Commonwealth, Eire has in fact so far used the machinery of the Commonwealth in her relations with foreign States and in the conduct of foreign affairs. The marked differences between her internal constitution and those of the oversea Dominions are not reflected in so concrete a form in external relations. This indeed

¹ op. cit., p. 37.

is not altogether surprising, for the United Kingdom Government and the Governments of the overseas Dominions continue to regard Eire as a partner in the Commonwealth, and although their view has evoked qualifications, it did not provoke explicit dissent from the Eire Government until 1948. In truth, if one turns from constitutional niceties to realities, what has existed in recent years has been a curious, illogical, but workable, amalgamation of the British conception of Dominion status and the Irish conception of External Association.

In the post-war world there has been a tacit readjustment in emphasis in Eire's attitude to the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. In 1947 Irish representatives attended unofficial Commonwealth talks on nationality and trade held in London; an Anglo-Irish trade agreement was signed in November 1947 and extended in June 1948, and at all stages Eire has co-operated as one of the sixteen nations in the discussions on the European Recovery Plan. This measure of co-operation may be taken to indicate a broad coincidence of interest between Eire and the United Kingdom in the great issues of foreign policy today. Both welcome closer co-operation with the United States, and both are prepared to give a full trial to the United Nations; though the exercise of the Russian veto in August 1947 once again resulted in the rejection of Eire's candidature for membership of the United Nations. In the future, therefore, and particularly in view of the present alignment of world forces, Eire may well tend to co-operate more closely with the Commonwealth countries. Even if her internal political outlook demands more marked emphasis on the external character of her association, she may well desire to place greater reliance in practice on the Commonwealth machinery for co-operative consultation in foreign affairs. At the least it can

be said that in the years before the war this machinery was a factor in keeping alive some sense of community of interest in world affairs.

The recent history of Anglo-Irish relations is mentioned here because it might be adduced as evidence that a system of consultation, however good, cannot in itself ensure that while 'every Dominion is now, and must always remain, the sole judge of the nature and extent of its co-operation, no common cause will be thereby imperilled'. And, of course, in itself it cannot. We have seen how the mechanism works, but, if experience in the wide field in no small measure justifies the confident assertions of the Balfour Declaration, that is because there existed a common outlook, a common sense of values, and above all common interests in the maintenance of peace and world security among the member Nations of the Commonwealth. It was their existence which persuaded the members of the Imperial Conference of 1926 that, though each Dominion was to be the judge of her own interests, those interests being what they were would lead to a concurrence of view on all great issues of foreign policy. What happened in 1939 is the supreme justification for their confidence. But the justification for the machinery of consultation which fostered and developed the existing community of interest and outlook may best be illustrated by the fact that member States of the Commonwealth reached the same conclusion by very different routes. They reached the same goal with all the greater certainty of mind because the machinery of the Commonwealth allowed them the liberty, and indeed insisted on their taking the responsibility, of finding their own way there.

Canada, the senior Dominion, may appropriately be taken to illustrate this line of thought. Over and above

her membership of the Commonwealth, the geographical position of Canada, her intimate association with the United States, and her internal tensions, have determined the direction of Canadian foreign policy before the war and since. In an instructive lecture delivered at Toronto in 1947 Mr St Laurent, Minister of External Affairs, then emphasized that the first general principle guiding the Canadian Government is that its 'external policies shall not destroy our unity.'¹ It was this primary condition of Canadian foreign policy that necessitated the adoption of what may best be described as a non-imperial reaction to the aggression of the dictators in Europe from 1937 onwards. It was in that year that Mr Mackenzie King reaffirmed in Parliament that Canada 'will not necessarily become involved in any war into which other parts of the British Empire may enter simply because we are part of the British Empire', but he warned also 'that forces of evil are present in the world, fighting against the forces of good. As long as there is this conflict, those who wish to see the good triumph must take every possible means to prevent evil from gaining control.' Taking these two extracts together, they afford a clue to the subsequent Canadian reaction to events in Europe and the Far East. Canada was determined, and what is important, all sections of the Canadian people were determined, 'to prevent evil from gaining control'. Therefore they were prepared, not as part of the British Empire, but because the British Empire formed part of the 'forces of good', to co-operate in resisting aggression. That attitude, though specifically Canadian in statement and in form, reflects a dominant trend in Commonwealth opinion before the war. It is the trend which leads to the conclusion that the policies

¹ L. St Laurent, *The Foundations of Canadian Policy in World Affairs* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 19.

which most firmly unite the Commonwealth are those that transcend exclusively Commonwealth interests. It can be seen now, though it was not realized at the time, that the Imperial Conference of 1937 became in fact one of the decisive meetings in the history of the Commonwealth, because as a result of the discussion that then took place the various member States recognized that the challenge threatening the world was not a challenge to imperial interests, but a threat to Britain itself and to world security.¹ Such a threat was in fact resisted by a united Commonwealth in 1939, thereby giving supreme justification for the confident assertions of the Balfour Declaration.

The emphasis in the years before the war was upon the separate identity of the Dominions in foreign policy. Now that that identity is so firmly established, the field of common concern may become more clearly defined. The trend of affairs in the post-war world suggests that as a result of the war that field has not narrowed, but widened. The more intimate association with the United States, the menace of new weapons annihilating distance, the allegiance given to the United Nations today by the member States of the Commonwealth, all are factors which in their own way underline a convergence of interest in foreign policy. If, in the coming years, the trend of world affairs accentuates this community of outlook and of interest among the member States of the Commonwealth by challenging their way of life and even their existence, then the machinery for co-operation may well be tightened by implicit assent while remaining the same in form. For it is well designed to reflect changing views of the purposes it may best serve and in so doing

¹ Miss G. Carter has made a valuable analysis of this approach. *The British Commonwealth and International Security* (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1947), Chap. X.

to provide a reliable barometer of opinion about the Commonwealth. This is by no means the least of its virtues. To those who complain that here is no substitute for decisive and determined action the answer is that if the peoples of the Commonwealth do not feel called upon to act with determination and decision in foreign affairs, that is something which constitutional machinery cannot remedy. It can interpret a collective will, it cannot create it. The Munich agreement, remarks Miss Carter, 'met with an immediate and joyful response throughout the Commonwealth'. No system of Commonwealth co-operation—even had it amounted to an agreement to have a common foreign policy—would, therefore, have produced any different result in 1938. Responsibility for Munich would have been spread wider, but the policy of appeasement would, for good or ill, have been pursued. That is a point to which sufficient thought is not always given. Wars may be avoided by common action, but common action springs from a common will and the fact that it is 'common' to many nations is no assurance that it will be resolute. The many are often as irresolute or as blind as the one.

While all the members of the Commonwealth are united in making support for the United Nations the primary objective of their foreign policy, realism, compels them to admit that, while in time the United Nations may and can be made an effective instrument of world government, it would be unwise now to place full reliance on it alone. At the least, therefore, the British Commonwealth is for its member Nations a form of reinsurance against aggression. Each and all are strengthened by the knowledge that in the last resort a challenge to world peace, or a threat to their own existence, would enlist the support of their partner States in the Commonwealth. In the

ordinary course of international affairs the weight and the influence of each member of the Commonwealth in the counsels of the nations is materially strengthened by the fact that it is a member of a world-wide group of States. That is an asset of inestimable value in times of international tension. Before and during international conferences co-operation and consultation between partners is a source alike of influence and strength, the more to be valued because it derives not from any restrictive obligations, but from a community of interest and a common sense of purpose. In a world dominated by Great Powers, ever becoming greater, there is no mean contribution to be made by a group of nations which, by the very fact of its existence, enables individual member States to play a role in international affairs not otherwise possible for middle or smaller Powers.

III

DOMINION CONCEPTIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Too often is it rather lightly assumed that the older Dominions are populated predominantly by people of British stock. This is, in fact, far from being the case. A fraction over 50 per cent of the population of Canada, and more than 60 per cent of the European population of South Africa, are of non-British extraction. If one numbers Eire among them, three of the five are officially bi-lingual. This varied linguistic and racial composition is a factor which has significant reactions upon the attitude of the Dominions to the Commonwealth. Only in Australia and New Zealand is it appropriate to think of Britain as the Mother Country, for, almost wholly populated by emigrants from the British Isles, they are Dominions in a truer sense than any of their partners.

To remember the multi-national foundation of the Commonwealth, now re-emphasized by the addition of the new Asian Dominions, is essential to the understanding of its polity and to the just appreciation of its achievement. It is because two of the older Dominions are populated in such considerable proportions by people of non-British extraction that the co-operation of the Commonwealth countries in peace and war and the potential contribution of its example to international understanding are so great. In South Africa, and earlier in Canada, two peoples, each proud of their distinctive loyalties and traditions, have been welded into one democratic State. That is an event

sufficiently rare as to deserve careful study. Influencing or determining policy from within, the French in Canada and the Afrikaners in South Africa have had a marked influence upon the development of the Commonwealth as a whole. If as racial groups they have tended to place their emphasis upon the independence of the member States, sometimes at the expense of the sense of wider community, sometimes in opposition to its underlying concepts; if more consistently they have shown themselves unduly sensitive, detecting the hidden hand of Whitehall where none any longer exists, that is because for them reconciliation with the Commonwealth was possible only as a sequel to assertion of full sovereign status. To them it was full independence that had to be reconciled with the interdependence of the Commonwealth as a whole; and while for this reason they have as racial groups wished to travel faster along the road that has led to this goal, no one familiar with the political outlook of English-speaking communities in the Prairie Provinces, on the Rand, or in Sydney would suppose for a moment that the descendants of the emigrants from the British Isles would have been content with any other solution. A difference in emphasis is not, therefore, necessarily a difference in aim.

Now that the full sovereign status of the Dominions is part of the accepted order of things what use collectively and individually are they going to make of it? It is very largely in their hands that the future destiny of the Commonwealth now lies. Moulded by very different political, economic, and social environments, retaining much of the vigour and directness of the frontier, the peoples of the older Dominions, while united in their devotion to the British way of life and in their allegiance to the Crown, inevitably look at the Commonwealth through different eyes. Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New

Zealand each have an individual conception of what it is and of what they would like it to become. At one in their view of its essential foundations, their approach to day-to-day co-operation within the Commonwealth reveals instinctive differences of emphasis. These differences, largely determined by internal political considerations and by geography, deserve more attention than they generally receive, if only because the individuality of each Dominion is now fully developed.

The Canadian Approach

In the Commonwealth Canada is the senior Dominion; in the world she is a middle Power generally recognized to be a potentially great Power. The country has vast, though not always accessible, natural resources; she is one of the great food-exporting nations of the world, and under the impact of two world wars her industrial development has been very remarkable indeed. Strategically Canada is well placed, though it may be that the Polar warfare of the future will make her position less secure from external attack than it has been hitherto. Over and above these general advantages, she enjoys particular advantages of which one of the most important is the possession of uranium. In a speech at Toronto on 8 May 1947, General McNaughton, President of the Atomic Energy Control Board, observed that in the development of atomic energy Canada had attained a position second only to that of the United States. If the scientists are right in assuming that the world is entering upon an atomic age, then this is a fact likely to place Canada in a key position in world affairs.

Canada's increasing responsibilities, both within the Commonwealth and in the world at large are now receiving due recognition. The part that she has played in

building up the new world order and the contribution which she has made in idealism, hard work, and practical example towards the creation of a better and more peaceful world are not easily to be surpassed. To that the Canadian election to the Security Council in November 1947, was a most fitting tribute. But, of course, so rapid an extension of international responsibilities has placed no light burden upon a country which in proportion to its size and responsibilities is thinly populated. A quarter of a century ago, Canada's representation overseas amounted to a High Commissioner in London and a High Commissioner in Washington. Even by 1936 her foreign legations were limited to those at Washington, Paris, and Tokyo. Today, as has already been noted, Canada is represented by High Commissioners in every Dominion (including India, Pakistan, and Ceylon) and she has representatives also in almost every foreign capital in the world. Her Department for External Affairs has been strained to provide personnel for this rapid increase in diplomatic representation. But, despite the difficulties, Canadian co-operation in international affairs has been whole-hearted, and at almost every international conference held since the end of the war she has been effectively represented.

The picture of Canada, a young progressive country rising in stature among the community of nations and contributing much to their counsels, is one that seems clear at a distance, but on closer inspection requires some modification. Internally Canada, like other continental States, is weakened by regionalism.¹ The country falls into four natural divisions. On a flight from east to west, there can

¹ For a full discussion of its implications, see Professor Alexander Brady, *Democracy in the Dominions* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 23 *et seq.*

be seen clearly marked out below the eastern sea-board region, comprising the Maritime Provinces; then the rich Valley of the St Lawrence enfolded to the north by the Laurentian Uplands; then, widely separated from it by a region of almost uninhabitable swamp and forest, the Prairie Provinces stretching out to the Rocky Mountains, and beyond them the western sea-board and British Columbia. If these physiographic cleavages do not correspond to cleavages in population and political sentiment, at least they do much to explain the undiminished strength of regional consciousness on the eastern and western sea-boards and in the Prairie Provinces. That consciousness may restrict the freedom of action of the central Federal Government, but it is not for that reason alone to be dismissed lightly as a liability.

No one can visit the Provincial capitals without being made aware that regional patriotism is a lively and stimulating force, without which life in an isolated Prairie city would be immeasurably the poorer. At its best it is also a unifying force, particularly in the west. In the Prairie Provinces, where traditional Canadian liberalism is to be found in its most vital form, the percentage of the population drawn from European stock, other than French or British, is high—39 per cent of the population in Saskatchewan, 32 per cent in Manitoba and 31 per cent in Alberta. In the assimilation of these comparatively recent settlers the Provincial governments and regional sentiment have a decisive role to play, for it is through contact with them that the wider loyalty to Canada is to be learned. The future political evolution of these groups is a matter of importance, not only for Canada but also for the Commonwealth, for their numbers now mean that a little less than half of the population of Canada is of British extraction. Indeed it is only on the western sea-board, in British

Columbia, that the racial composition remains overwhelmingly British in origin.

The wealth of Canada tends more and more to become concentrated in the St Lawrence Valley. There, in its two most fertile provinces, Ontario and Quebec, are to be found 60 per cent of the population of the whole country; 80 per cent of its manufacturing production¹; its two largest cities, Toronto and Montreal, and its capital, Ottawa. In the Maritimes and especially in the Prairies, it is a constant complaint that the wealth of the country and its population are steadily drained away to this ever-expanding centre, whose manufacturing predominance was accentuated by the Second World War.

It is the fundamental weakness of Canada that in the wealthy, heavily populated St Lawrence Valley there exists a deep and enduring political and cultural cleavage between the descendants of French settlers, who now comprise some 80 per cent of the population of the Province of Quebec, and those of their English conquerors now exploiting so successfully the resources of Ontario. It is the tension between these two groups, between Quebec and Ontario, that dominates the Canadian political scene, and by its existence goes far to determine the character of her relationship with the Commonwealth and the rest of the world.

The French-Canadian population, which has increased from some 60,000 to more than 4 million in 150 years, now constitutes some 36 per cent of the total population of Canada. Its rapid rate of increase suggests that perhaps in time French-Canadians may constitute the majority in the country as a whole. Professor Toynbee has even speculated whether the day may not come when the descendants of the French settlers dominate the whole of the North

¹ cf. Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

American Continent. But counter-balancing factors suggest that their rate of increase will henceforward progressively decline, even though it remains higher than that of the English-speaking Canadians. At the moment the French-Canadians remain a minority, very conscious of being a minority in a continent dominated by Anglo-Saxon stock and the Anglo-Saxon outlook, and it is this which makes them cling the more uncompromisingly to their traditional beliefs and their traditional standard of values. The influence of the Roman Catholic Church, though weakening in the towns where industrialization has made considerable strides, remains decisive. The French-Canadian cherishes tradition. He believes in the simple virtues of that peasant life which were transplanted from Normandy before the Revolution. He is jealous of provincial rights, for in them he sees a notable protection of his way of life; he has no national loyalty other than to Canada itself, for the France he knew disappeared in 1789 and he has little sympathy with the left-wing anti-clerical republic that has replaced it. With his eye always fixed with suspicion on the wealthy, thrusting, resourceful Protestant society of Ontario, he tends to think of Britain as a detached and, on the whole, fair-minded observer. Tradition favours a hierarchical ordering of society with a monarchy at its head, and the Royal visit of 1939 showed that the loyalty of the people of Quebec to the Crown is deep and sincere. Membership of the Commonwealth is valued as a safeguard. It provides at the least an insurance against the submergence of a small French-speaking minority in a vast Anglo-Saxon political entity in North America. But their emphasis is always on Canada, a nation. British Columbia should be rechristened 'La Colombie Canadienne'. There should be no commitments in 'imperialist' policies, no participation in 'imperialist'

wars. If Canada goes to war, it must be shown to the satisfaction of the French-Canadians that it is a war in which it is in Canada's national interest to participate. Here their view coincides with that of English-speaking Liberals and many Conservatives, but the emphasis is rather different. Whereas Canadian liberal opinion is actively internationalist in outlook, Quebec tends to be isolationist. If, to quote Mr Mackenzie King's words once again, Canada is prepared to fight to defend interests 'that transcend Commonwealth interests' it will be the French-Canadian who will be the hardest to convince that those interests have in fact been 'transcended'. But, if suspicious, he is fair-minded and open to conviction, as the vote taken in Ottawa in September 1939 so conclusively showed.

The province of Quebec returns sixty-five members to the Canadian House of Commons, which consists of two hundred and forty-five members. Under the Canadian party system this means that the province wields in practice a degree of political power greater than its numbers warrant. But even were this not so, it is clear that national unity would demand that Quebec should at the least be reconciled to any external policy that Canada is to follow. This necessity, often exceedingly irksome to the Imperialist and Progressive Conservative groups in Ontario, has been the guiding factor in Mr Mackenzie King's long administration. It has been his outstanding achievement that over a period of twenty years, he has deliberately and successfully pursued policies which will divide the country least. That has meant an emphasis on Canada as a nation, consistent opposition to any centralization of the Commonwealth which would be anathema to French-Canadian and left-wing opinion alike, and at the same time positively a reliance upon informal consultation

and co-operation with the Commonwealth. This approach to the Commonwealth has allowed, even fostered, Canadian co-operation on a scale that in war and peace alike has been remarkable. Its character throughout has been determined by what Mr St Laurent has described as the first principle of Canadian external policy—namely, that it should not destroy Canadian unity. This is a consideration arising chiefly from the tension between the two main cultural groups, but Canada has also to be 'on guard against the claims of an extravagant regionalism no matter where they have their origin. Our history has shown this to be a consideration in our external policy of which we, even more than others, must be perpetually conscious. The role of this country in world affairs will prosper only as we maintain this principle, for a divided Canada will be a powerless one'.¹

If internal tensions predetermine a middle of the road policy for Canada, its wisdom is reinforced by her geographical position on the North American continent. It is not possible to be the neighbour of the United States along nearly four thousand miles of frontier and behave as though you were not. Across the border there pour into the Dominion not only raw materials and goods, but also ideas and a way of life which are distinct at once from those of Europe and from those of other parts of the Commonwealth. This mighty influence both attracts and repels. The Canadians have fewer illusions about the United States than people situated more remotely from it, just as they can judge more truly of its enduring virtues and its tremendous material strength. It is only when fully aware of the impact of the United States on Canadian life that it becomes possible to assess at its true significance the decision of the Canadian Parliament in 1939 to declare

¹ L. St Laurent, *op. cit.* p. 21.

war on Germany while her mighty neighbour remained non-belligerent. Here indeed was striking testimony to the intimacy of Canada's ties with the Commonwealth.

Under the present alignment of world forces Canadian association for defence purposes with the United States has become a cardinal factor in her policy. It was in August 1940 that the two countries agreed to set up a Permanent Joint Board, whose task it was to study all problems related to sea, land, and air defence of the North American Continent. The arrangement then made was extended in 1947 with a view to continuing active defence co-operation in peace-time. Mr Mackenzie King, in announcing this on 12 February 1947, alluded to its wider implications and underlying purpose. What was involved, he said, was co-operation on the following principles: (1) interchange of selected individuals so as to increase the familiarity of each country's establishment with that of the other; (2) general co-operation and exchange of observers in connexion with exercises and with the development and tests of material; (3) encouragement of common designs and standards in arms, equipment, organization, methods of training, and new developments; (4) mutual and reciprocal availability of military, naval and air facilities. It has always been emphasized that these regional defence arrangements were regarded as a necessary insurance against aggression until an effective system of international security had been established, and that they would not preclude or supersede Commonwealth arrangements for defence, training, and organization. They were in some measure a recognition of the potential importance in future warfare of the Polar regions across which lies the shortest route between North America and the principal population centres of the world. In terms of defence, in addition to looking east and west,

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as in the past, Canada must now take the north into consideration, and there her interest coincides with that of the United States.

The interdependence of Canada with both the United Kingdom and the United States is revealed as clearly in the economic as in the political field. In 1946 Canadian exports were valued at \$2,312 million, a figure which was more than two and a half times the average for the five pre-war years. Canada's two best trading customers were the United States and the United Kingdom, but in contrast to pre-war years the United States has now replaced the United Kingdom as the chief purchaser of Canadian goods. Exports to the United States were valued at \$888 million, those to the United Kingdom at \$597 million. Of the exports to the United Kingdom two-thirds were food products in part financed out of the proceeds of the Canadian Loan. It is a fact that Canada's 'great but vulnerable export industries'¹ mean not only that reliance must be placed upon trade with her two principal customers, but also that a balance in that trade must be maintained. At the end of 1947 the consequences of a lack of balance were seen, and drastic restrictions had to be imposed upon imports of non-essentials from the United States in order to relieve the acute shortage of United States dollars in Canada.

Those who have always been fearful lest Canadian co-operation with the United States indicated a deliberate loosening of her ties with the Commonwealth have shown insufficient appreciation of the realities of her position strategically as well as economically. Moreover, in actual fact the alignment of forces in the post-war world suggests that in relation to the United States Canadian policy has

¹ The phrase was used by Mr Mackinnon, Minister for Trade and Commerce, in January 1947.

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been far sighted. If it was geography which first made it a cardinal principle of Canadian foreign policy that she should try always to keep in step both with the United Kingdom and with the United States, both geography and wider political and strategical considerations have now drawn together the United States and all the member States of the Commonwealth. Here Canada has been a pioneer along a road which all have followed during and since the war.

The long-term necessity of co-ordinating Canadian policy with that of the United States has strongly reinforced Canadian opposition to any formalization of the machinery of Commonwealth co-operation and of the specific commitments which it might involve. Mr St Laurent has recently recalled that Canada had never attempted to define her relationship with the Commonwealth in precise terms, and maintained that any attempt to do so now should be resisted. To reduce the Commonwealth relationship to formal terms or specific commitments, he argues, would undermine the foundation of the association, with whose working the Canadian Government would seem to be well satisfied. Mr Mackenzie King's emphasis has always been on the informality of Commonwealth relations. He favours not conferences, but informal exchanges of view. He feels that the greatest care should be taken not only to leave to each Dominion unfettered control of its own policy, but also that in the exercise of that control there should be no deliberate attempt to create a clearly defined Commonwealth point of view, and still less a Commonwealth bloc. But this approach to Commonwealth relations does not carry to its Canadian protagonists any suggestion that the ties of the Commonwealth are being thereby weakened. On the contrary, the informality of the machinery for co-operation

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may be a sign of growing intimacy. Mr St Laurent described Canada as a member of 'an association of free nations capable of common action in an emergency, greater and more strong than that of any formal military or diplomatic alliance the world has ever known'.

With some reservations, Canada's attitude towards the Commonwealth may perhaps best be illustrated by the stormy reactions to a series of speeches, made by Empire leaders in 1943-4, on the need for some readjustment in the relations between the Commonwealth countries tending towards a rather greater measure of centralized control. It was on 25 November 1943, that Field-Marshal Smuts addressed the United Kingdom Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association; it was on 24 January 1944, that Lord Halifax made his equally striking contribution in Toronto; while during the same period Mr Curtin, then Prime Minister of Australia, was advocating some form of Imperial Council and Secretariat.

Field-Marshal Smuts, in his speech, was thinking more of the African continent than the North American, but his references to regional grouping within the Commonwealth with a view at once to its consolidation by means of more active Dominion participation in the control of non-self-governing territories, and with a view, also, to its strengthening in the world at large, created no small stir in Canada. Underlying Field-Marshal Smuts's speech was the belief that in the post-war world the resources of the British Commonwealth would need to be more effectively organized if it were to play a role equal to that of the United States and of Russia in world affairs. Approaching this theme from a rather different point of view, Lord Halifax, speaking at Toronto, reached in certain essentials very similar conclusions. One part of his speech may usefully be recalled here. He said:

While the Statute of Westminster assured to each and every Dominion complete self-government, it perforce left unsolved more obstinate problems arising in the fields of foreign policy and defence. The right of each member to determine its own external affairs may mean gain or it may mean loss. It is plainly loss if, with our essential unity of ideal, the responsibility for action which represents that unity is not visibly shared by all. It is an immeasurable gain if on vital issues we can achieve a common foreign policy, expressed not by a single vote but by the unison of many. So, too, in the field of defence, while there must be individual responsibility, there must also be unity of policy. . . .

But there is one thought which I would like to leave with you now. The Statute of Westminster was in a sense a Declaration of Independence. But it was more than that. It was also a Declaration of Interdependence, a recognition that in the world of the twentieth century no country can live by itself and for itself alone. It did not attempt to make a stereotyped pattern or mould to which the Commonwealth must conform, but it did leave the greatest latitude for development, in the conviction that, in working out our fate together, we should discover that independence and interdependence, so far from being incompatible conceptions, were not only complementary but necessary to each other. . . .

To say this is to make no selfish claim. The unity of the Commonwealth is no mere British interest. So far from being an obstacle, it is a condition necessary to that working partnership with the United States, Russia, and China, to which we look. If we are to play our rightful part in the preservation of peace, we can only play it as a Commonwealth united, vital, and coherent. By so doing, and only by so doing, can we hope to achieve the high purposes to which we are dedicated by the suffering and sacrifices of war.

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These words provoked profound repercussions. Thanks to the reproduction of contemporary editorial opinion in a book by Mr James G. Allen¹ of the University of Colorado, it is possible to survey contemporary comment of the Canadian press in a convenient form. It is instructive reading. The balance of opinion was extremely unfavourable to Lord Halifax's analysis of the part the Commonwealth might best play in the post-war world. The *Winnipeg Free Press* in a series of articles challenged the premises and criticized the conclusions reached by Lord Halifax, and, where they were related to the same theme, of Field-Marshal Smuts as well. This paper, the traditional mouthpiece of Prairie liberalism, viewed with infinite distaste the prospect that the post-war world would be one in which power politics should prevail, and in which the British Commonwealth would need to measure its strength against those of the two *colossi*, the United States and the U.S.S.R. Running through both speeches the *Winnipeg Free Press* detected the clear note of fear. Their spokesmen were obsessed by the thought of power as being the only force that counted. They feared that the United Kingdom could not qualify as the fourth master nation, and therefore, the additional support of the Dominions was essential. But that meant centralization, however disguised. Any centralization of the Commonwealth in such a way as to produce a common economic, strategic or foreign policy was denounced as 'a step along the road to yesterday'. If Lord Halifax was right in saying that Britain, without the rest of the British Commonwealth and Empire, could hardly claim equal partnership with the United States, Russia, and China² after the war, he was

¹ J. G. Allen, *Editorial Opinion in the Contemporary British Commonwealth and Empire* (Boulder, Colorado, 1946).

² At that time it was fashionable to include China.

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wrong in urging that the Dominions should fortify 'our partnership' because 'the British Commonwealth and Empire must be the fourth Power in that group upon which, under Providence, the peace of the world will depend'. On this, the principal issue, the vast body of Canadian opinion was at one, though the comments of few papers were as forceful or as astringent as those of the *Winnipeg Free Press*. To most Canadians the emergence of four colossal power blocs seemed 'to doom the human family', to quote the words of Mr Coldwell the leader of the C.C.F., 'to a third world war', while, as he also observed, any serious attempt 'to centralize the Commonwealth of Nations would destroy it'.

From the opposition to Lord Halifax's ideas the Progressive Conservative Party remained aloof. Their view, on the whole, tended to be rather cautious and they recommended that the whole question of intra-Imperial relations should be judiciously examined without undue heat and without prejudice when the Conference of Dominion Prime Ministers met in the spring of 1944 in London. But Mr Mackenzie King did not favour such Fabian tactics. His verdict was clear and he defined his position in the House of Commons in Ottawa, strongly repudiating the idea of a common foreign policy for the Nations of the British Commonwealth, and the concept of a post-war world controlled by the Great Power blocs. In this speech of 30 January 1944, Mr Mackenzie King said:

A concrete issue in external policy has been raised in recent speeches delivered by Lord Halifax and Field-Marshal Smuts. It relates to the domination of certain Great Powers. Both speeches expressed the view that the future peace of the world depended on the attainment of an equal partnership in strength and influence

between the Great Powers among the United Nations. Both took the position that the resources and manpower of the British Isles were too small to enable the United Kingdom to compete with the United States and the Soviet Union in power and authority after the war. Both, therefore, argued that it was necessary that the United Kingdom should have the constant support of other countries, in order to preserve a proper balance. Field-Marshal Smuts thought that this might be achieved by a close association between the United Kingdom and 'the smaller democracies in Western Europe'; he had little to say of the place of the British Commonwealth as such. Lord Halifax, on the other hand declared: 'Not Great Britain only, but the British Commonwealth and Empire, must be the fourth Power in that group upon which, under Providence, the peace of the world will henceforth depend.'

With what is implied in the argument employed by both these eminent public men, I am unable to agree. It is indeed true beyond question that the peace of the world depends on preserving on the side of peace a large superiority of power, so that those who wish to disturb the peace can have no chance of success. But I must ask whether the best way of attaining this is to seek a balance of strength between three or four Great Powers. Should we not, indeed must we not, aim at attaining the necessary superiority of power by creating an effective international system inside which the co-operation of all peace-loving countries is freely sought and given?

It seems to me not to be a matter of matching manpower and resources, or in other words military and industrial potential, between three or four dominant States. What we must strive for is close co-operation among those great States themselves and all other like-minded countries. Behind the conception expressed by Lord Halifax and Field-Marshal Smuts there lurks the

idea of inevitable rivalry between the Great Powers. Could Canada, situated as she is geographically between the United States and the Soviet Union, and at the same time a member of the British Commonwealth, for one moment give support to such an idea?

What would seem now to be suggested is that the prime Canadian commitment should be to pursue in all matters of external relations in 'foreign policy, defence, economic affairs, colonial questions, and communications', to cite Lord Halifax's words—a common policy to be framed and executed by all the governments of the Commonwealth. I maintain that apart from all questions as to how that common policy is to be reached, or enforced, such a conception runs counter to the establishment of effective world security, and therefore is opposed to the true interests of the Commonwealth itself.

We are certainly determined to see the closest collaboration continue between Canada, the United Kingdom, and other Commonwealth countries. Nothing that I am saying should be construed as supporting any other view than this.

Collaboration inside the British Commonwealth has, and will continue to have, a special degree of intimacy. When, however, it comes to dealing with the great issues which determine peace or war, prosperity or depression, it must not, in aim or method, be exclusive. In meeting world issues of security, employment, and social standards we must join not only with Commonwealth countries but with all like-minded States, if our purposes and ideals are to prevail. Our commitments on these great issues must be part of a general scheme, whether they be on a world basis or regional in nature.

We look forward, therefore, to close collaboration in the interests of peace not only inside the British Commonwealth, but also with all friendly nations small as well as great.

For Mr Mackenzie King's statement there was general approval in Canada, though some of his Conservative critics doubted whether his faith in an international world organization was wholly realistic. The statement, however, constitutes a considered expression of the predominant Canadian view of Commonwealth relations, so lucid as to require no further elaboration. It was the view which was implicitly endorsed by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference three months later.

What light does all this throw on the Canadian approach to Commonwealth affairs? It reveals Canadian policy as a blend of idealism, too easily disposed perhaps to place international and Commonwealth co-operation in a false antithesis, and of concrete economic and political interests. In Canada, more than in the old world, there is a firm conviction that future wars are to be avoided only by the creation of an effective machinery of international government. Not even the discouragements that have overtaken the world since 1944 have undermined this belief. Because of it, exclusive commitments to the Commonwealth are considered undesirable in principle. For the Commonwealth to speak with one voice is not an asset but a liability both for the Commonwealth and the world. To idealism there are added more practical considerations, of which the most weighty externally is the fact that the defence of Canada is dependent in the last resort upon co-operation with the United States. Viewed against this background, Canada's whole-hearted support for Western Union is easy to understand. It fulfils the essential conditions of her foreign policy and resolves her superficially conflicting loyalties. The conception of a league of free peoples, which inspires Western Union, reflects an ideal transcending exclusively Commonwealth interests; it is a practical step along the road to world

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order and government, and it commands the support equally of the United Kingdom and the United States. When to all this is added the fact that Western Union serves as a shield against Russian aggression, even isolationists in French-Canada are prepared to enter into specific military commitments in Western Europe.

On the whole, Canada is well satisfied with the machinery for Commonwealth consultation which has developed in recent years. The principles which underlie it and its actual practice commend themselves to the bulk of Canadian opinion. They like to feel that consultation is free and informal, that its aim is an exchange of view, and not hard and fast conclusions which tend to carry with them firm commitments. Canada remains opposed equally to the centralization and the dissolution of the Commonwealth. 'This middle ground', observed a Canadian contributor to *The Round Table*,

is her historic position . . . , there has been only one policy of external relations and it has been followed with variations according to time and circumstances by every Canadian Government. It has been based on an intuitive understanding of the fundamental fact in Canadian history that Canada has been the product of the balance between North-South and East-West pulls. Her policy has been determined by this inescapable fact. Let no one be deceived in this matter. Canada will not cease to be both a North American and a British Commonwealth Nation.¹

'Canadian nationality', writes Professor Brady,² 'is most positively reflected today in the common will of both British and French to make no complete surrender to North American continentalism, a will which is particularly

¹ *The Round Table*, March 1944, pp. 191-2.

² *op. cit.*, p. 38.

strong among the French.' It was on New Year's Day, 1947, that the Canadian Citizenship Act came into force. On 3 January, twenty-six applicants, including the Prime Minister, received the first certificates of Canadian citizenship. The Act provided for the first time a full definition of Canadian citizenship, and in welcoming the new citizens the Prime Minister spoke with emotion of the stage in Canadian history marked by its enactment. 'The vision and courage of men and women', he said,

have transformed our country, almost within living memory, from small and virtually unknown regions of forest and farm into one of the great industrial nations of the world. But more than material growth has arisen from the vision and courage of our people. They have also sought, continuously, to defend and to extend the frontiers of freedom. More than once, in the name of Canada, the sons and daughters of Canada, have valiantly served, and thousands have died, to save the world's freedom. In world affairs our country has an outstanding record of responsibility and integrity.

This is a verdict from which no one would wish to dissent.

The Australian Approach

The Australian conception of the Commonwealth differs in emphasis from the Canadian just because it is conditioned by very different factors. Australia, too, is a continental State with a federal system of government, but its population is remarkably homogeneous. Nearly 90 per cent of its people come from the British Isles, and there is in the country no large immigrant group which exercises any decisive pressure in the formation of policy. The Roman Catholic minority of 17 per cent is mostly of Irish descent, and while remaining a force in Australian internal politics, is otherwise wholly Australian in outlook. When

Mr Curtin came to Britain for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in 1944 he came, as he said on landing, as the representative of 'seven million Britishers'. In the post-war period the Australian demand has been for British immigrants, and it is only when they are not forthcoming in sufficient numbers that the Australian Government has been compelled to look further afield. On Asia and its myriad peoples their eyes will not, however, rest, for the White Australian policy, which has done so much to preserve the homogeneity of the Australian population, is an article of faith decisively vindicated for Australians during the Japanese War, when the presence of an unreliable Japanese minority in Australia might have had disastrous consequences.

No one familiar with the history of British settlement overseas will suppose for an instant that the predominantly 'British' character of Australia inclines her Government or people toward a placid acceptance of the edicts of Downing Street. Deeply implanted among all British settlers has been the determination to govern themselves. On his first accession to office in 1941 Mr Curtin showed himself 'hypersensitive about any action or attitude implying that the leading strings of colonial days had not been cleanly cut'.¹ In Australia this reaction has been accentuated not by the need to reconcile racial groups as in Canada and South Africa, but by the sense of remoteness. Australians easily think of themselves as an outpost of Britain and of the European peoples in an ocean whose shores are dominated by peoples of other stock. 'We are a white island', said Mr W. M. Hughes, 'in a vast coloured ocean.' This sense of being an outpost of the Commonwealth in the Pacific, superimposed upon the social cohesion of the population, has given a distinctive flavour

¹ *The Round Table*, March 1944, p. 169.

to the Australian concept of the Commonwealth. To them, with a strategic situation far less favourable than that of Canada, it has constituted an indispensable insurance against aggression during the formative period of their existence, and thinking naturally and spontaneously of Britain as the Mother Country, they do not suffer from the same inhibitions about the measure of their co-operation, though equally insistent that it should be on a basis of fully recognized equality. The principal aim of their recent policy has been to make the Commonwealth as a whole more conscious of the problems of the Pacific, and to ensure that in this area, where their interests and those of New Zealand are so vitally involved, the Pacific Dominions shall have a full voice in determining policy, and further, shall take the initiative and after consultation act on behalf of the Commonwealth as a whole.

In contrast to Canada and South Africa, Australia considered herself in 1939 to be at war when the United Kingdom was at war, and the fact was broadcast to the people by the Prime Minister without any formal declaration by the Federal Parliament, which was in session at the time. But since 1939, and particularly under the strain of the Pacific War, a new approach to Commonwealth affairs has emerged. War was declared on Japan by the independent action of the Australian Government tendering their advice to the King in his capacity as King of Australia, and in 1942 the Statute of Westminster was ratified. Since that time a rapid expansion has also taken place in Australia's representation overseas, to coincide with her assumption of ever-increasing responsibilities in the Pacific War, and the subsequent peace settlement with Japan.

The Australia-New Zealand Agreement of January 1944 was a significant expression of the new approach of

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the Pacific Dominions. The Pact recorded the agreement of two countries to collaborate closely in matters of common concern; to strive for the 'maximum degree of unity' in the presentation of their policies, and to set up a permanent secretariat to facilitate its effective co-ordination. The Agreement was primarily a defence agreement, but it covered co-operation in other fields, particularly in promoting the welfare of the native peoples of the Pacific. Dr Evatt spoke of the Agreement as a 'Pacific Charter' concerned with 'future plans for the peace, order and good government of the region to which they (Australia and New Zealand) both belong'; and observed more significantly, since the fact of the Agreement was more important than its content, that the Pacific Dominions were 'also trustees for British interests and British civilization in the Pacific'.

The initiative taken in Canberra in 1944 was followed by the setting up of the South Pacific Commission in 1947; by the appointment of an Australian General as Commander-in-Chief of the British Commonwealth occupation forces in Japan; by the calling of an informal Commonwealth Conference in Canberra in August 1947 to discuss the terms of the Peace Treaty with Japan. This initiative in Pacific affairs is regarded in Australia as a means whereby the Commonwealth as a whole may be strengthened. It is argued that Britain's diminished resources, both economic and military, mean that she cannot carry the same weight of responsibility in the Pacific after as before the war, and that the time has come when a much greater share of the burden should rightly be carried by the Pacific Dominions. What is needed in practice is a redistribution of responsibilities in relation to the capacity to bear them. What is involved in principle was alluded to by Dr Evatt on 13 March 1946. He said:

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I need not trace here the rapid development in practice of Canada and Australia's activities in the international field between 1926 and 1946. It is sufficient to suggest that an entirely new concept in British Commonwealth relations is now emerging. This concept tends to reconcile full Dominion autonomy with full British Commonwealth co-operation. The same principle involves the possibility of a Dominion acting in certain regions or for certain purposes on behalf of the other members of the British Commonwealth including the United Kingdom itself. This is evidence that the machinery of co-operation between nations of the British Commonwealth has now reached a stage where a common policy can be carried out through a chosen Dominion instrumentality in an area or in relation to a subject matter which is of primary concern to that Dominion. This principle is capable of extension and suggests the possible integration of British Commonwealth policy at a higher level by a new procedure. Its importance is very great and may rapidly increase.

This changing conception¹, reinforced by war-time experience, has created in Australia a notable pre-occupation with the consultative machinery of the Commonwealth. Of the Dominions, Australia alone favoured the re-creation of an Imperial War Cabinet, and alone responded to the invitation of the United Kingdom Government in 1940 to nominate a representative to the War Cabinet. But this was a temporary expedient which could not usefully, or even properly, be extended into peace-time. Should there not be something of a more lasting character which would make co-operation more continuous and more effective, in the same way as the secretariat established under the terms of the Anzac Agreement was designed to

¹ cf. 'Australia's Attitude to British Commonwealth Relations' by Douglas Copland in the *International Journal* 1947-48, p. 44.

facilitate co-operation between the two Pacific Dominions? To this subject Mr Curtin devoted much thought. It was in August 1943, when the tide of war in the Pacific was turning, that Mr Curtin spoke at Adelaide of the need for 'at least a standing consultative body' within the Commonwealth in order to deal with the aftermath of war. Later he both elaborated and modified his proposal, describing what he had in mind as an 'Imperial Secretariat', which would meet in the Dominion capitals as well as in London and which would mark a new stage in the evolution of the British Empire by 'the association of independent sovereign peoples in matters which concerned them as a whole'. The purpose of the secretariat was to improve the machinery of consultation by creating a permanent body, apparently without executive responsibility, whose principal aim would be to assist in giving unified expression to the policies of the Commonwealth. Mr Curtin hoped that it would enable 'the instinctive association' of Britain and the Dominions to find a more practical and coherent expression.

When Mr Curtin visited London in May 1944 he explained that he wanted consultations of Prime Ministers to be more frequent, 'and I want those consultations to have their intervals studded with frequent interchanges of information so that when a question arises it does not come like a bolt out of the blue.'¹ Here he reflected a dominant Australian concern lest their country be committed implicitly at least to policies which they had not themselves formulated, nor had sufficient opportunity to consider. In the forefront of Mr Curtin's mind was the implementation of post-war policy in the Pacific area. More formal machinery for consultation fostering the emergence of common policies would enable Australia to play a more

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 5 May 1944.

decisive role in that area. 'The place that Australia will occupy in the Pacific after the War', said Mr Curtin, 'can never be the same as it was up to 1939, and she must have available the advantages of concerted Empire policy if she is to be a power to stand for democracy in the South Pacific.'

The proposals for an Imperial Secretariat received a rather cool reception both in Canada and in South Africa, where they were considered open to some at least of the objections adduced by the critics of Lord Halifax's Toronto speech. While in London, Mr Fraser made it clear that they were not endorsed by New Zealand. The fundamental misgiving was lest an Empire Secretariat might evolve from a consultative into a central policy organization. The criticism of the *Cape Times* underlined a weakness in the proposal which many considered fatal to its usefulness:

Surely consultation nowadays is as close as it could possibly be? The creation of a special secretariat may improve the filing of Dominion Prime Ministers' decisions, but it cannot hasten or improve these decisions. No secretariat can make decisions unless it has been given plenipotentiary powers; and we doubt whether any Dominion—even Australia—would be willing to give the right of decision to some one in a distant part of the world, when its Prime Minister, with the privilege of being able to consult his Cabinet at any time, can receive information and give his judgment at the lifting of a telephone.¹

That doubt is well founded. No Dominion has shown itself prepared to delegate authority sufficient to commit it on any major issue of policy to a representative overseas, or even to its Prime Minister. Were it to do so direct

¹ *Cape Times*, 5 May 1944.

responsibility to Parliament would cease to be a reality. In so far as there was difference in emphasis in 1944 it was the Canadian-South African view which prevailed. Mr Curtin remarked: 'If I cannot have four brethren and can have three, well, three's better than none.' But in fact none seem prepared to travel along the road he suggested. All were at one in purpose, they differed only as to the best way of achieving that purpose.

If Mr Curtin's proposals, which were tentative in character, received no support from the Dominion Prime Ministers assembled in 1944, the sense of need which prompted their submission is still felt in Australia. In February 1948, Lord Bruce in a personal capacity sponsored proposals in the House of Lords for the creation of a permanent consultative council, designed to improve the machinery of intra-imperial consultation which he believed to be altogether inadequate. But once more opposition was pronounced. From South Africa, Field-Marshal Smuts commented: 'We are completely against Lord Bruce's proposal . . . the more machinery we have, the more friction there will be.' If, therefore, any advance along these lines is to be made it seems that it can be achieved only on a reciprocal basis between the United Kingdom and the Pacific Dominions within the broader framework of the existing less formalized machinery of consultation. But here two questions arise: To what extent are the views of Mr Curtin and of Lord Bruce to be regarded as representative of Australian opinion irrespective of party? At the 1946 Conference of Commonwealth Ministers, Dr Evatt concurred in the general opinion that the existing machinery was wholly satisfactory. More important, despite the emphasis that has been placed upon improvements in machinery, is it not open to question whether any reforms in this narrow field would by them-

selves be sufficient to meet the wider purposes their sponsors have in mind?

The South African Approach

In South Africa alone of the older oversea Dominions is membership of the Commonwealth a living political issue. It is a question with which all political leaders in the Union are firmly confronted, about which they can scarcely avoid thinking most carefully or reaching positive conclusions which they must be prepared to defend. All this applies with particular force to the Afrikaners who support the Commonwealth connexion; who say with Smuts, 'I have fought my battle and I have made peace'; for it is they who have to defend their conversion against the bitter attacks of the unreconciled. It is perhaps because of this that South African statesmen, like Smuts, and Botha before him, have contributed so much to the idea of the Commonwealth and to the vision of the wider purposes it may one day serve. For them it is not something which can be easily accepted; it is something to strive for and to justify in deed as well as in word.

Of the European population of the Union some 60 per cent are Afrikaans-speaking and some 40 per cent English-speaking. But in proportion to numbers the English-speaking South African plays a comparatively small part in politics. He tends to pride himself on his detachment. He is interested in industry, commerce, and mining, and is apt to be impatient of politics which he leaves rather contemptuously to the Afrikaner. This aloofness, noticeable at the Cape, is most pronounced in Natal where right-wing Imperialists view the dominant political tendencies in the Union with no slight aversion, and have not abandoned thinking in terms of secession. A very interesting comparison could be made between Durban, Toronto, and

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Belfast. In all three the political atmosphere is right-wing and imperialist. Belfast and Toronto, however, play a most active and vigorous part in the political life of Northern Ireland and Canada respectively and are very much in the main stream of politics. Durban, on the contrary, is somewhat outside it. This has all the more significance in that Durban, though it was developed a great deal commercially during the war, has not the same secure foundation in the commerce and business of the country as either Belfast or Toronto. In general, while the English settlers' comparative detachment from politics may have some short-term advantages in that it leaves the constitutional issue to be fought out largely between the two sections of Afrikaner opinion, on any long-term reckoning it must surely have unfortunate consequences. In the meantime it lends colour to the claim of the Nationalists that the Afrikaner is the only true South African, for he alone has no divided loyalties.

Like Canada, and the Pacific Dominions, South Africa's positive approach to the Commonwealth is profoundly influenced by geography. A small European settlement at the southern end of a vast African continent, its eyes, like those of Cecil Rhodes in the gardens at Cape Town, are always fixed on the hinterland to the north. But to the north today lies not only the deep heart of Africa awaiting development by European enterprise, but also a political threat against which it is prudent to take precautions. Distances may be great and the terrain difficult, but to the north there exists no formidable barrier, short of the Mediterranean, against an aggressor equipped with modern means of transport and of warfare. This is a fact to which the remarkable exploits of the Union Defence Forces in 1941-2 themselves afford most striking testimony. In the safeguarding of that vital Imperial

artery; in ensuring that no potentially hostile power gains a foothold on its southern shore, South Africa is profoundly concerned. That concern is shared fully by the United Kingdom, responsible as she is for the defence of her colonial territories. Common interest in defence is powerfully reinforced by common interest in the economic and political development of Central Africa. That arises partly because it is a reservoir from which no insignificant proportion of the labour for the gold mines on which the South African economy depends, and for her expanding industries is drawn, but far more from wider, long-term considerations. Development to the north, particularly in the British colonies, must have the most profound repercussions upon the outlook of the natives in South Africa, who outnumber the European population by more than four to one. The wider the differences in native policy, the greater must be the concern of the Union Government. Economic development in Central Africa on a basis of partnership must sooner or later confront Dr Malan's concept of segregation with a challenge from which it can hardly escape. It is partly because this has already been implicitly recognized that the South African outlook tends to be economically, if not politically, expansionist. Field-Marshal Smuts's proposals for the decentralization of the Colonial Empire in 1943 envisaged a greater measure of South African participation in the formulation of colonial economic policy. So long, however, as there exist marked differences in South African and British native policies, an advance along these lines is fraught with the most formidable difficulties.

Common interests in the economic development and in the defence of Africa might have been expected to modify the attitude of the Afrikaner nationalist towards the Commonwealth. This it has not done to so marked an

extent as might be expected. The stronghold of nationalist sentiment is out on the veldt, and in common with countrymen the world over the Dutch farmer has a long and tenacious memory. He broods on the past, and by past events he judges the present. He is profoundly isolationist, and the criticisms of South African policy towards her Indian and African citizens at the United Nations have served only to harden his determination to go his own way. Of the Commonwealth he thinks little, but he thinks much of relations between South Africa and the United Kingdom. Here opinion has certainly been influenced unfavourably by Britain's relative weakness in the immediate post-war period. In season and out, the extreme nationalists, however sympathetic individually, maintain that whatever might have been said for association with Britain in the day of her greatness—and they did not themselves find it particularly convincing—there was nothing whatever to be said for 'hitching our wagon to a waning star'. On the other hand, even the most extreme nationalist has become conscious of the looming menace of Russia, and that tends to reconcile him to the British connexion in a way that Nazi aggression never did. The appeal of Communism is to the under-privileged, and in South Africa that is the non-European. For this reason the pressure of outside events is now becoming the decisive factor in moulding nationalist opinion towards the Commonwealth, and accounts for the decision of the Nationalist Party in the 1948 election campaign that the moment was inopportune for making secession the principal plank in the Party's platform. But the ideal of the republic remains, though Dr Malan stated categorically before the 1948 election that 'a republic could only be formed on the broad basis of the will of the people'; and on the morrow of his electoral victory, that

South Africa would 'gladly continue' her good relations with the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth countries. 'We freely acknowledge', he said, 'the particularly friendly relationship in which we stand' with the Commonwealth. This is not the language of a doctrinaire, republican secessionist.

In what way do nationalists think of a South African Republic? A characteristic answer was given in the summer of 1940 by *Die Transvaler*, the principal and most extreme mouth-piece of nationalist opinion:

It will be a republic in which there will be no place for British public institutions. These things, which are foreign to the spirit and wishes of the Afrikaner people, will be annihilated to the very foundations. It will be a republic with a government that is not subject to all sorts of foreign influences. General Smuts' holistic views, according to which the small Afrikaans culture must be dissolved in the great English culture, and South Africa be but a part of the great British Empire, will find no place in this Afrikaans republic. Mr Hofmeyr's negrophilism and liberalism, which would wipe out all colour bars and would make the Afrikaner a backboneless being, will have no place in this Afrikaans republic. Colonel Stallard's imperialism, which would make South Africa subordinate in all respects to British interests, will have no place in this Afrikaans republic. Mr Madeley's socialism, and conceptions of the Afrikaans people, will have no place in this Afrikaans republic. The spirit of people who are too afraid to speak about a republic, will also find no entry in this republic. In economic policy this republic will be no milch-cow of Britain. It will be a republic in which the Chamber of Mines will not have authority. It will be a republic built up on the ideals and views of such men as Piet Retief, Paul Kruger and Marthinus Steyn.¹

¹ Quoted in Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

This is the language and the thought of the past, but it is still the language of the extreme nationalist voter, if not of his political leaders, with the one modification that the emphasis on the need for complete segregation of the native has become even more marked in the intervening years. Apart from anything else, it is the measure of the nationalists' lack of a sense of reality that they sincerely believe such a policy to be practicable in a country where the labour force is exclusively African.

The picture of the Republic which *Die Transvaler* depicts is close to the land. Its language and its way of thought are those of a countryman, of a farmer who has never forgotten the savage warfare of the past. To understand what has deeply implanted the convictions which underlie it, it is well to remember the isolated Dutch farms lost in the veldt, some fifty or a hundred miles from their nearest European neighbours; to read the memorials to the Voortrekkers who lost their lives in blood-thirsty warfare against the Zulus and the Matabele; even to visit Bloemfontein, that 'island surrounded by land', where is to be sensed, deep rooted in circumstance and history, the Dutch determination that the Kaffir must be kept in his place.

But the balance of forces within South Africa is changing. The population is becoming progressively more urbanized. In 1926, 61 per cent of the Afrikaner male population was rural, while 73 per cent of the English-speaking South African male population was urban. Since then the younger Afrikaners have drifted steadily to the towns, while out on the veldt their elders lament that their children are lost to their traditional way of life if not to their traditional political outlook. This movement is reflected in the 1946 census figures which show that two-thirds of the increase in the European population took place in the Transvaal, where the rate of increase was

almost 30 per cent, while that in the Orange Free State, the traditional Afrikaner-Nationalist stronghold, was only one-half per cent. With the development of the new gold fields in the Orange Free State the tendency towards urbanization will most certainly be accentuated there as well.

The 1948 General Election suggested, however, that urbanization was likely not to disrupt the Nationalist Party, but slowly to modify its outlook. Certainly one of the most significant trends in recent years has been the growth in the political influence of the Rand. Long past is the time when a Cape politician could speak contemptuously of Johannesburg as 'a Monte Carlo superimposed upon Sodom and Gomorrah'. To-day it has the principal voice in the determination of the political future of the country, and, however its dominant political opinion may vary, it cannot, because of the source of the wealth on which it has so splendidly flourished, be isolationist in outlook.

Another factor which has contributed to the breakdown of the traditional isolationist outlook has been the war. The Afrikaners enlisted in the Union defence forces in large numbers, constituting at least some 40 per cent of their total strength, and the war-time experiences of many of them have broken down the narrower conceptions of an isolated, exclusively Afrikaner republic. In this way the war has contributed at least to the widening of the basis of co-operation between the two European peoples in the Union. But it would be a mistake to assume that all the Afrikaners who enlisted were either pro-Smuts or solidly in support of the Commonwealth connexion.

A comparison between nationalist opinion in South Africa and that in Eire is instructive. The Afrikaner nationalist is on the whole more extreme in his opinions, and certainly the observations of *Die Transvaler* incline to a more marked asperity than those of Irish nationalist

papers. Both share an extreme distrust of Soviet Russia, in both instances largely on religious grounds, and in both cases their mistrust does something to soften feelings towards Britain. This is particularly noticeable in South Africa where the nationalists do not leave out of sight the possibility that one day they may be allies with Britain in a great crusade against Bolshevism. Then again Afrikaner and Irish nationalists are at one in their emphasis on the extreme importance of language. In both countries it is the symbol of nationhood. But here the parallel ends. Afrikaans is a spoken language, and the anxiety of the Afrikaner is to elevate it from the status of a dialect to that of a culture; while the problem of the Gael is to bring once more into common use a language whose cultural contribution in the past is beyond dispute. The difficulties in the way of each objective are formidable. This makes Afrikaners and Irishmen all the more sensitive to anything in the nature of an attack on the language from outside, or to anything that savours of cultural penetration. Like the Irishman, the Afrikaner defends his devotion to the language by maintaining that it is a condition of distinctive national survival. Once the language is lost, the national heritage and any contribution which the Dutch in South Africa can make to civilization is lost as well. This in turn accounts both for the emphasis on racial purity and for the isolationist outlook of the Afrikaner, for only by avoiding contact with the world is cultural contamination to be avoided.

The Dutch Reformed Church is strongly nationalist in outlook, and its influence in South Africa is profound, particularly in the platteland. It is possible that the political influence of the Dutch Reformed Church will be weakened by the movement of the population from countryside to town, the scale of which has been indicated. In South

Africa, moreover, in contrast to both Canada and Ireland, there is no religious barrier to inter-marriage. This is a very important fact because inter-marriage between the two European races is frequent, and the children of such marriages tend to discard extreme isolationist views. On the other hand, unlike both Canada and Ireland, the two European races are geographically intermingled all over the Union, with the result that educational and allied problems tend to be an ever-present stimulant to racial feeling.

Since the Irish Free State joined the ranks of the Dominions there has been not inconsiderable interest in South Africa in constitutional developments there. This applies notably to Mr de Valera's statement in 1945 that Eire was a republic associated with the Commonwealth. That was a solution of the constitutional question which at first sight commended itself to a number of Afrikaners who were either moderate supporters of Dr Malan or lukewarm followers of Smuts. Provided that a republic could be established with South Africa's membership of the Commonwealth essentially unimpaired, a *via media* might seem to then have been found which the English-speaking South Africans might somehow or other be persuaded to swallow, and the nationalists might be prepared to accept. In 1945 the merits of a solution on these lines were considered by *Forum*, a weekly periodical of standing. If this was kite-flying the first flight was brief. The nationalists declared that it was intolerable that South Africa should remain tied to the Commonwealth, whilst the English-speaking South Africans affirmed that it was intolerable that South Africa should become a republic. These reactions are instructive, if not final, and deserve to be carefully pondered. They underline one essential difference between Eire and South Africa. The

former is a homogeneous country with a well defined political outlook; the latter a heterogeneous amalgamation of peoples and races for whom compromise is the condition of the continued cohesion of the State. What emerges is what divides opinion least. Field-Marshal Smuts believes that he has found it in a decentralized Commonwealth whose recent evolution has been profoundly influenced by South Africa. Within that Commonwealth, supported if need arise by its strength, freely deciding her own policy even in the most vital issues of peace and war, but always remembering that membership of the Commonwealth carries obligations as well as conferring benefits, he believes that South Africa can find her destiny. 'I look', said Field-Marshal Smuts, 'upon this Empire and Commonwealth as the best missionary enterprise that has been launched for a thousand years. This is a mission to mankind of good will, good government, and human co-operation, a mission of freedom and human helpfulness in the perils that beset our human lot.' With that enterprise South Africa is inextricably associated. Participation in two World Wars and the partnership with the other members of the Commonwealth which it has fostered; the broad community of interest with the United Kingdom in the defence and the development of Africa; the rapid post-war expansion of South African industry and the new flow of immigrants from the British Isles which it encouraged, link the Union by bonds of interest more closely perhaps than ever before to the Commonwealth. While to any form of centralization South Africa is certain to remain resolutely opposed, it can hardly be questioned that in practice, whatever constitutional structure the nationalists may favour, informal, friendly partnership is of no small advantage to a country which despite its wealth, is economically and strategically vulnerable.

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In South Africa, Europeans often voice a lack of confidence in the future. South Africa, it is observed, is the ideal country in which to live for this generation and the next, but after that who knows? The pattern of the future, it must be confessed, is not easy to forecast. South Africa, so often judged by the false standard of the European nation-State, is in fact an amalgam of peoples and races associated in what may be a political experiment of high significance. Against such a background the wisdom of Fabian tactics, of Field-Marshal Smuts's reaction to many a formidable problem, 'let it develop', must remain for long the course of wisdom. What this pioneer country demands at this stage in its evolution is not predetermined plans but flexibility of outlook. Of nothing is that more true than its relations with the Commonwealth. Let them develop without undue misgivings on either side about the narrower doctrinal issues. It is hard indeed to believe that a country which has produced so many great men, and has itself an element of greatness about it, has not a great future before it, difficult though it may be to foresee precisely what form that future will take.

Changing Concepts

Since the definition of Dominion status in 1926, there has been a school of thought not wholly in sympathy with the trend of developments in intra-imperial relations. This school, broadly speaking, favours the creation of an effective central machinery embracing at least a standing conference of Dominion ministers which would meet at definite intervals and be served by an intra-Imperial secretariat.¹ It feels that only by carefully devised con-

¹ The arguments for Federal Union, though related, start from different premises and fall outside the scope of this essay. For a statement of them see *The Round Table*, March 1948, p. 526. The objections to centralized machinery would clearly apply with even greater force to a more radical federal solution.

stitutional machinery of this kind, which would have a counterpart in the economic and strategic field, can the Empire play an effective role in the preservation of peace and the waging of war. Without it, diffusion of interest, concentration on regional concerns, maldistribution of responsibilities in relation to resources will mean, it is claimed, that, contrary to the confident conviction enunciated in 1926, the 'common cause' will suffer. By this school of thought the lessons of the Imperial War Cabinet are considered to have been too lightly disregarded. They maintain that an experiment, which was at the time unanimously considered by the ministers assembled in London to have been successful and to justify survival as a regular constitutional procedure, has been sacrificed unwisely to centrifugal pressure. They remember Mr Lloyd George's statement of 17 May 1917 to the House of Commons in which he declared:

The Imperial War Cabinet was unanimous that the new procedure (of an Imperial War Cabinet sitting in London) had been of such service not only to all its members but to the Empire that it ought not to be allowed to fall into desuetude. Accordingly at the last session I proposed formally, on behalf of the British Government, that meetings of an Imperial Cabinet should be held annually or at any intermediate time when matters of urgent Imperial concern require to be settled, and that the Imperial Cabinet should consist of the Prime Minister of each of the Dominions, or some specially accredited alternate possessed of equal authority, and of a representative of the Indian people to be appointed by the Government of India. This proposal met with the cordial approval of the Overseas representatives, and we hope that the holding of an annual Imperial Cabinet to discuss foreign affairs and

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other aspects of Imperial policy will become an accepted convention of the British Constitution.¹

The ebbing of imperial sentiment after 1919, the conviction that the world had been made 'safe for democracy', the belief that the League of Nations was an adequate protection against aggression, and above all a fundamental and deeply rooted distaste in the Dominions for any form of control from London, not only meant that no centralizing machinery was established, but also that even the formal constitution of the Imperial Conference as a permanent body was allowed to lapse. It is this lack of machinery at the centre, and of the formal unity of action which it might help to foster, that this school of thought regrets. They feel that in its absence the pre-occupations of the member States will mean a progressive weakening of the imperial link, and with it a sensible diminution of the Empire's contribution to the peace of the world. In the Second World War their misgivings were accentuated by the tendency of the Great Powers to become ever greater, and found some expression in the speeches of Lord Halifax and of Field-Marshal Smuts, the pioneer among Empire statesmen in his exploration of the possibility of a union of the Western European States with Britain.

To debate the issue in the various forms in which it might be stated would be out of place here. What is clear beyond dispute is that the dominant trend of thought in the Dominions has remained consistently favourable to decentralization. Any reversal of that policy would make relations with the Commonwealth an acrimonious political issue within at least two of the older Dominions. However excellent in themselves, institutions are of little value

¹ Quoted by L. S. Amery, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

unless they are in harmony with the spirit of the organization they are intended to serve.¹

If an ever-hardening conviction in favour of a decentralized Commonwealth is one of the conclusions to be drawn from this brief survey of Dominion conceptions of the Commonwealth, another is the parallel but later growth of a sense of regional responsibilities which decentralization has brought in its train. If unity of action by the Commonwealth in the great issues of European politics is a matter of moment to the United Kingdom, equally the support of her partners is almost a condition of Australian leadership in the Pacific. This emphasis on regional interests is in time likely to create a new sense of partnership by underlining the mutual interdependence of the Commonwealth States. It may also lead directly to a redistribution of responsibilities more in accord with material resources, for the more active a member State in foreign policy the more concerned must she be to have available the force by which policy can be made effective in the last resort. The emphasis which shifted during the war years from formal Imperial Conferences to informal meetings of Dominion Prime Ministers now inclines towards a series of bi-lateral conversations between representatives of the member nations. If Dr Malan for reasons of his own first voiced a preference for such restricted bi-lateral discussions instead of general Commonwealth Conferences, the direction of Canadian and even of Australian policy in recent years has been to some extent the same. As regional interests loom larger, as the individual policies of the member nations crystallize, so the area for discussions of equal interest and profit to all tends to lessen. But it does not, and cannot, disappear. The ideal arrangement, therefore, would seem to be frequent bi-lateral conferences

¹ cf. L. S. Amery, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

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between the United Kingdom and the individual member nations of the Commonwealth, supplemented by Commonwealth Conferences at which all are represented when the need arises.

Implicit in the approach of the Dominions is the conviction that Commonwealth policy rests upon a common way of life and a sense of well-trying partnership. Ideals and experience in co-operation are felt to render superfluous much at least of that formal institutional machinery which makes its indispensable contribution in the early stages, when the habit of co-operation is being built up. In Western Union such institutions have their all-important role; in the Commonwealth much of their usefulness has been outlived. 'I have never thought', said Mr Churchill in May 1944, 'that the Empire needed tying together with bits of string. We do not have to consider how to bind ourselves more closely. It would pass the wit of man to do so.' But to rest content with the intimacy of the relationship would be imprudent. It needs not only to be intimate, but also to be responsive to the changing balance of world power and to the challenge of new ideas and new forces within. What is the impact of the New Asia upon the thought and practice of the Commonwealth? That is a question to which an answer must now be sought.

IV

THE ASIAN CONFERENCE, 1947

IN the affairs of men and nations there come moments when the many are instinctively conscious that they are passing across one of the great watersheds in human history. Sometimes contemporary opinion is mistaken, sometimes its vision is clouded by sentiment, but more often the cool judgement of the historian confirms the instinctive impression of the multitude. All over Europe men hailed the falling of the Bastille—an event of little importance in itself¹—as the herald of a new age. In that they were not mistaken. But little indeed they foresaw of what the age would bring; little they understood the nature of the forces that were released when high upon the pikestaff was hoisted de Launay's bleeding head.

Some such impressions must have passed through the minds of many who attended the first Inter-Asian Conference in New Delhi in 1947. The Conference was not an affair of great moment, but the time of its assembly was. The representatives of a continent then gathered together to welcome, a trifle self-consciously, the dawn of a new era in their long-exploited, age-old continent. The Japanese had been decisively defeated by the Western Powers: but the ending of a short-lived Japanese domination in Eastern Asia had little psychological significance in comparison with that created by the impending withdrawal of

¹ Louis Madelin in his history of *The French Revolution* (Eng. trans., London, Heinemann, 1916), p. 78, recalls that the prisoners released from the Bastille on 14 July 1789 were four coiners, two madmen, and a sadistic debauchee.

the West. It was by the death-bed of the Indian Empire that delegates hailed the birth of the new order in Asia. When Britain voluntarily laid down her sceptre what places remained for the lesser Imperialisms of France and the Netherlands? It was with the peoples of Asia alone that the future of Asia at long last lay, and eager, clamorous, rejoicing, filled with a great ambition and high ideals, they came forward to claim their own.

As a political event the Asian Conference was of secondary importance; as the symbol of the emergence of a new order it is likely to live in Asian history. And if its idealism wavered in the face of primeval passions loosed from restraint as the bonds of authority were temporarily relaxed; if its high hopes were tarnished by hitherto unsuspected national tensions; if its sense of direction was blurred by not always purposeful discussion, these are things that should not be allowed to conceal the fact that the Conference chanced to be held at a psychologically decisive moment in the history of the continent. The ideas which found expression at it; the motives which inspired it; the trends of thought which emerged from it, conflicting and imprecise in some respects though they may have been, are, and are likely to remain, relevant not only to any consideration of Britain's future role in Asia but far more to any consideration of the pattern of future relations between East and West.

The Asian Conference had a character of its own. In part it was visible, dramatic evidence of the awakening of a continent and of India's significant contribution to it; and in part it was a quasi-academic discussion of social, cultural, and political problems in Asia. There was among the leaders of the Indian Congress Party a sincere conviction that the hour had struck when India should take the initiative in Asian affairs. On the eve of independence

she had a decisive contribution to make, a new role to play; and the interests of India and of South-East Asia at least demanded that she should play it. In December 1946, Pandit Nehru had expressed in the Constituent Assembly his hope that:

the new constitution for India will lead India to real freedom, that it will lead also to the freedom of other countries of Asia because, however unworthy, we have become—let us recognize it—leaders of the freedom movement of Asia, and whatever we do we should think of ourselves in these larger terms.

And leadership, with the responsibilities it brings, had come at a decisive, a historic moment. In his opening speech to the Conference in the Purana Qila, Pandit Nehru threw this into bold relief:

Standing on this watershed which divides two epochs of human history we can look back on our long past and look forward to the future. . . . Asia after a long period of quiescence has suddenly become important again in world affairs.

This feeling that the moment was historic was no doubt reinforced by the calculation that the time happened also to be propitious for India to lay a claim to leadership in the new Asia. China, rent by civil war, scarcely seemed in a position to dispute such a pretension, and nationalist sentiment running high in South-East Asia certainly favoured in principle the creation of a continental or more probably regional bloc under the leadership of a soon to be independent India. Indian leadership wisely exercised might well prove a powerful stabilizing force. Although at the very beginning of the Conference Pandit Nehru explicitly denied that there was any ground for the fears expressed, particularly in the United States, that the

Conference heralded the birth of a Pan-Asian movement, later discussions showed that many delegates were temperamentally prepared to think along such lines. The proposal that a permanent Asian organization might be set up in Delhi at the end of the deliberations of the Conference reinforced the feeling that Congress India would welcome some formal recognition of its leadership in Asia. These ulterior aims were fiercely denounced in *Dawn*, the Muslim newspaper, which spoke of the Conference as the 'Asian fraud' perpetrated by Nehru 'the Hindu imperialist'. And, in consequence, rightly or wrongly, delegates from other Asian States came to regard the establishment of a permanent inter-Asian organization in Delhi as the criterion by which to measure the achievement of the Congress Party at the Conference.

In fact, the Asian Conference, which lasted from 23 March to 2 April 1947, was as much the product of chance as of design. The Indian Council of World Affairs, which convened it, had in the first instance contemplated a regional conference for the South-East Asia area alone, and it was only when all the implications of such a regional conference were examined that it was felt that the time and the political conditions prevailing in Asia made the summoning of a continental conference the more appropriate course. Though the Conference was in fact called by India there was much truth in Pandit Nehru's assertion that 'the idea of such a conference arose simultaneously in many minds and in many countries of Asia' because there was 'a widespread awareness that the time had come for us, peoples of Asia, to meet together, to hold together and to advance together'.

The Conference was nominally a cultural conference. It was so designated partly to deflect criticism, partly to escape from certain practical political difficulties, but it

was clear from the first that the discussions could not be confined to the cultural plane. Indeed, what the leaders in most Asian countries wanted was a conference which would fully and frankly discuss the political implications of the post-war world in their continental context. That being so, the cultural camouflage was something of a liability because it meant in practice that the politico-economic field was surveyed not as a whole but only in those parts which could, in some way or other, be linked with culture. That was why—to refer at this stage to one striking omission—there was virtually no consideration of strategic problems and their bearing on the new political order.

In his speech at the opening plenary session, from which a quotation has already been made, Pandit Nehru made much of the fact that ‘one of the notable consequences of European domination of Asia has been the isolation of the countries of Asia from one another’. Before the British came, India had always had contacts and intercourse with neighbouring countries, but for the last two centuries she had been almost completely isolated from the rest of Asia, with her ‘chief window on the outer world looking out to the sea route which led to England’. This sense of an enforced separation one from another in the past certainly enhanced in the eyes of the delegates the significance of the reunion. It was explained by Dr Sjahrir that so large an Indonesian delegation had been nominated just because in the past Indonesians had had so little opportunity of meeting fellow Asians. Of the delegates to the Conference only a small minority, even of those from neighbouring countries, had visited India before. Inevitably this first meeting of so many of the leaders of opinion in Asia invested the Conference with a character and a potential importance which Pandit Nehru had in mind in claiming that ‘when the history of our present times is

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written, this Conference may well stand out as the landmark which divides the past of Asia from the future.'

The Conference was reasonably representative of the new forces in Asia. Geographically its character may be judged by the list of national representatives who attended.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Delegates</i>	<i>Observers</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Delegates</i>	<i>Observers</i>
Afghanistan	5	1	Mongolia	3	1
Arab League	..	1	Nepal	5	2
Bhutan	..	2	Palestine	9	1
Burma	17	5	Philippines	6	..
Ceylon	16	3	Siam	2	2
China	8	1	Soviet Republics	14	2
Egypt	3	1	Tibet	8	1
India	52	6	Turkey	..	1
Indo-China	7	..	Australia	..	2
Indonesia	8	8	United King-		
Iran	3	2	dom	..	2
Korea	5	..	United States	..	3
Malaya	12	..	United Nations	..	1

The total number of delegates was about 190 and the number of observers about 50. To these should be added distinguished visitors, mostly Indians or foreign diplomats accredited to the Government of India, who brought the total attendance up to nearly 400. The number of countries represented was 31 if the Soviet Asian republics are listed separately. The republics whose delegates were actually present for the deliberations of the Conference were: Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. The delegates from the two remaining Soviet Asian republics, Turkmenistan and Kirghizia, arrived characteristically enough in New Delhi after the Conference had ended. Owing to travel and other difficulties, the delegations from Korea and Outer Mongolia arrived very late in the proceedings, and Dr Sjahrir reached New Delhi only a few days before their close, delayed by critical negotiations with the Dutch in

Indonesia. The Middle East countries were but thinly represented.

Politically representative of the dominant trends and aspirations in Asia, the Conference was not well balanced on particular regional or national questions. The delegations varied in quality as well as in numbers. For the most part they contained a strong official element, and when this was the case they were in a position to speak on political questions with a certain authority. The Chinese delegation, for example, was led by Cheng Yin-fun, a member of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang, and included the Vice-Minister of Education, and Professor Wen Yuan-ning whose contributions to the discussion were always purposeful. Mr George Yeh¹ of the Chinese Foreign Office was present as an observer. Communist China was unrepresented. The delegates from Indonesia, who received so sympathetic a welcome, and the young, realistic team from Burma were representative of locally dominant political opinion. On the other hand the delegation from Malaya did not fairly reflect the balance of opinion there.

The Indian delegation was by far the largest. Of its 52 members, 39 were Hindus, 7 Muslims and the remainder Sikhs, Parsees and Christians. The boycott of the Conference by the Muslim League meant that the Muslim members of the delegation were either Congressmen or politically detached. As a result the delegation was politically unrepresentative of India as a whole, but it is perhaps not unfair to say that intellectually it was representative enough. Throughout the discussions this large Indian delegation played a predominant part. Since it reflected many conflicting political and more especially economic views, a coherent, considered statement of the Indian

¹ Later first Chinese Ambassador to the Republic of Burma.

outlook was not placed before the Conference. On the contrary, there was a refreshing variety of opinion which incidentally prevented the Conference from feeling swamped by the Indian contribution to its deliberations.

The inherent dualism of the Conference emerged in the speeches made at the opening plenary sessions. Its cultural purpose was insistently proclaimed, but it was the political and economic future of Asia that delegates had come to discuss, and they were not to be deflected from their purpose. The very atmosphere was permeated with political ideas and speculation. Those opening sessions, held in the Purana Qila, attended by vast crowds, heightened an agreeable feeling of history in the making. At such a moment culture could be no more than the modest hand-maid of politics.

It was in the discussion groups that the work of the Conference was done; it was from their deliberations that the trend of opinion among the Asian peoples emerged. To give a comprehensive summary of their discussions is not the purpose of this essay,¹ and it may be indeed that an impressionist record of their salient features is the more enlightening for a western reader.

The discussion groups covered five principal topics:

1. National movements for freedom.
2. Migration and racial problems.
3. Economic development and social services.
4. Cultural problems.
5. Women's problems.

Except for the first, these subjects could usefully have been treated in a non-political context, but the border-line was narrow and easily crossed. The Indian delegation and the

¹ A full record is to be found in *Asian Relations* (Asian Relations Organization, New Delhi, 1948).

delegations from South-East Asia played by far the most prominent part in the discussions, which as a result tended to circle round the problems of this area.

The general starting-point for the discussions was that the day had now come for the ending of imperialist exploitation and foreign rule in Asia. This assertion commanded so enthusiastic and general an assent that there was little or no examination of its political implications. Interest, therefore, tended to shift to the economic side. It was felt that economic development in Asian countries lagged behind even their political development; it was essential that living standards for the masses of the people should be raised, and the only way in which this could be done was by creating in each State a planned economy. None of the States in the south-east margin of Asia felt that they could aim at national self-sufficiency. The objective must, therefore, be a planned economy over the area as a whole. This was impossible while the colonial Powers were in control, but might, it was felt, soon become practicable.

Since the smaller countries could not hope to carry through industrialization with their own resources, they favoured strongly a South-East Asian or even a continental bloc. Both the delegates from Ceylon and those from other countries, including India, expressed great misgivings about dollar imperialism, saying that they did not wish to shake off a political master only to be subjected to an economic master. Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia, and Malaya, however, expressed equal mistrust of Indian and Chinese penetration and this subject, once raised, was a recurrent feature of the Conference. No sooner was Western exploitation denounced than fears emerged of a more stringent Indian and Chinese economic stranglehold once it had gone.

When opinion within the group appeared to be crystalizing in favour of the South-East Asian or even an Asian bloc, a leading Indian delegate intervened. Industrialization, he said, was the only means of raising the standard of living. For that, India and other countries must have a planned economy, but it was madness to think in terms of an economic bloc in Asia. Such a concept was neither desirable nor practicable; it would lead to conflict with the West, it would mean 'putting a rope around our own necks'. There was no reality in this sharp division between continents and, waving his hand in the direction of the Soviet and Palestinian delegates, he asked, 'To which continent do these gentlemen belong? Are they Asians or Europeans?' But he agreed that the Asian countries should have nothing further to do economically either with the imperialism 'that was retreating' or with the imperialism 'that was advancing behind dollar loans'. From this last point, the Chinese implicitly dissented. Provided that the loans were negotiated on satisfactory terms and did not give a foreign country any economic stranglehold, they maintained there was no valid objection to them.

The same point of view emerged from the discussions on the racial question. There was a pronounced sentimental feeling for Asian unity, but once the general principles, on which it was easy to reach agreement, were disposed of, there emerged more and more clearly great mistrust of Indian and Chinese expansion in South-East Asia. It was in the final discussion on the racial question that a formal resolution was proposed by an Azerbaijan delegate, to the effect that no Asian country should permit discrimination on grounds of race. This resolution, which evoked much sympathy, was debarred on procedural grounds.

It is worth recording also that the group on Racial

Problems felt that each country had a right and must necessarily retain the right of determining its own immigration policy. This view, which was accepted in the light of the formidable threat which the teeming millions of India and China constituted for the smaller South-East Asian countries, carried implications for the 'White Australia' policy which did not fail to elicit comment in the press. In a sense the views recorded by the group undoubtedly provide a not ineffective answer to Asians who challenge this policy on grounds of equity. On the other hand it is clear that the Conference itself had not in mind exclusion on a strictly racial basis.

The most significant of the discussion groups was the most political, that on National Movements. Here it was generally accepted that the first essential step was the liquidation of imperial régimes in Asia, and autonomy for all dependent peoples. Some of the delegates spoke in extreme terms of the life blood having been sucked from their peoples by European exploitation, but on the whole their eyes were focused on the future rather than on the past. It was assumed that the day of Western Imperialism was over, and the delegates entertained in the Viceroy's House felt they were witnessing the last departing gleams of its sunset splendour, not only in New Delhi, but throughout a continent. The days of domination were drawing quickly to their close; the last page in the lamentable history of exploitation of the East by the West was being written and the sentiments of the hour were voiced by the Indian poetess, Mrs Sarojini Naidu: 'Fellow-Asians, my comrades and my kinsmen arise: Remember the end of darkness is over. Together, men and women, let us march towards the dawn.'

In facing up to practical issues, the delicate question arose whether or not active assistance should be given by

the more powerful Asian States to their smaller neighbours 'struggling to be free'. The possibility was frankly considered. Many of the delegates from South-East Asia, including the not very representative delegation from Malaya, argued the case for common action. This was fully endorsed by the delegates from Indonesia and Viet-Nam, who appealed to the greater Asian Powers to give more than mere moral or sentimental support.

These outspoken appeals for intervention called forth a rejoinder from Pandit Nehru. He urged the delegates not to tread the dangerous path of recommending armed assistance to national movements. The situation in Indo-China was most complicated. It was the path of wisdom to try to narrow the area of conflict, not to enlarge it. Though every delegate should know that freedom movements in South-East Asia would have the whole-hearted moral sympathy of India, it was altogether unrealistic to expect active intervention.

A suggestion was also made that a neutrality bloc should be formed in the continent as a whole, or alternatively in South-East Asia. This proposal clearly contemplated that the participating countries should not only refrain from taking an active part in any war irrespective of the cause of its outbreak, but should also deny to all belligerents a supply of raw materials. These views, which seemed to command wide sympathy, were hardly consistent with the acceptance of United Nations obligations, though it was interesting to observe that a neutrality bloc was advocated at one and the same time as fuller United Nations representation for Asian countries.

The Conference was debarred from passing resolutions, and therefore, although the general sense of the Conference emerged clearly enough on a great many questions, it was not recorded in precise and practical form. There

was revealed, however, a tolerably wide area of agreement amongst Asian peoples and a desire to act in concert. The one positive conclusion was the decision to hold a similar conference in two years' time in China and in the meantime to set up a Provincial Council on which all Asian States would be represented, under the presidency of Pandit Nehru, with a view to creating some permanent machinery for the summoning of continental or of regional conferences. What form the permanent organization should take remained undecided. Pandit Nehru remarked that as President of the Provisional Council he would have nothing to guide him but the 'memories of a thousand years'. It is clear, however, that its work must depend largely on the vitality of the various national organizations for its effectiveness. The Provisional Council, recognizing this, recommended as a first step that institutes devoted wholly to Asian studies should be set up in each country.

The most significant thing about these practical conclusions was that the second Conference should be held in China. This was the question about which delegates were much concerned, particularly in the concluding days of the Conference, and the decision reached was an undoubted disappointment to the Indian representatives. They had hoped that a strong and lasting organization might be established, and for that a permanent centre was a well-nigh indispensable condition.

The countries attending the Conference fell very roughly into five groups: India, China, South-East Asia, with which Siam may be included, the Middle East States, the U.S.S.R. There were, of course, many cross-currents and on certain subjects there were even sharp divisions of opinion within individual delegations, but by and large this was the pattern that emerged.

It was the aim of India to acquire implicitly some form of leadership in Asia. Sympathetic though many might be to the fulfilment of her legitimate aspirations there was something curiously unpropitious, even ominous, in the news of a boycott by the Muslim League as the Conference assembled. At the first plenary meeting further indication of the prevailing tension was given by an announcement of the curfew hours in New Delhi. Throughout the proceedings, somewhat fulsome references to the work of the Conference in the Congress papers were matched by bitter attacks in the League press. In these attacks Nehru was not spared and in *Dawn's* final commentary on the Conference a vicious onslaught was made on him. 'Skilfully he has worked himself into some sort of all-Asian leadership. That is just what this ambitious Hindu leader had intended—to thrust himself upon the Asian nations as their leader and through his attainment of that prestige and eminence to further the expansionist designs of Indian Hinduism.' These were reminders that behind the Conference, though casting only passing shadows on its deliberations, lay the dark, smouldering passions of communalism. Some six months later, among historic ruins in the Purana Qila, where the plenary sessions had been held, were herded together some 50,000 wretched, fearful Muslim refugees seeking sanctuary from the fury which had devastated the Punjab, and was now let loose in all its horror in the capital of India.

During the Asian Conference many responsible Indians frankly recognized the possibility of civil war. A few entertained fears of the emergence of a militarist Hindu State. Both had some influence on the opinions of delegates. If India were to fall the victim of civil war, then she was not likely to prove an effective leader of the Asian nations. Moreover, might not internal dissension bring

in its train the possibility of ultimate intervention from outside in Indian affairs? That such questions were asked was in one sense more important than their actual justification. They go far to explain why the Chinese view that Delhi should not be the permanent meeting place for continental conferences was acceded to unanimously. On this point the Chinese representatives, anxious to ensure that China's claims to political and cultural leadership in Asia were not overlooked, had reason to be well satisfied. Her delegation, representative only of Nationalist China, was more experienced in international conferences than any other, and intervened rarely but usually with effect.

The South-East Asia group, anxious to assert itself, took advantage of the Conference to confirm the newly acquired status of its several members. To them the concept of a continental bloc—the slogan 'Asia for the Asians'—made a great appeal. They were conscious, however, that individually they were not strong enough to stand on their own feet either economically or politically, and whilst anxious to throw off foreign rule they were filled with mistrust of the naturally expansive tendencies of both China and India. As a form of safeguard it was implicitly understood, though rarely explicitly stated, that these countries would probably retain a treaty link with their former European rulers.

There was a particularly close bond of sympathy between the Indonesian and Viet Nam delegates. Both, in common with the Malaysians, were keenly interested in the possibility of strong moral support amounting to positive assistance from their great neighbours. The undoubtedly powerful sentimental appeal of these small States might have produced more concrete results had the situation been less confused. In this respect Viet Nam suffered particularly. Indo-China was represented not only by the

Republican delegates from Viet Nam but also by French-approved delegates from the other territories. It was some little time before the Conference as a whole was able to identify these rival representatives and to distinguish clearly between their respective claims.

The delegates from the Middle East chose to play a comparatively minor, non-committal role. Thinly represented in any event, these States clearly stood outside the main field of discussion, though the Jewish delegates from Palestine made a good impression by their contribution to the talks on agricultural reconstruction. The representatives of the Muslim States acquired no one-sided picture of Indian politics.

The Soviet representatives made a rather mixed impression. It will be recalled that the republics represented were Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. To what extent they are culturally autonomous was left a matter of speculation, though their representatives lost few opportunities of emphasizing their distinctive regional contributions to the life of the Soviet Union. In the earlier stages the continued iteration by the delegates of the transformation effected in Soviet Asia by the Revolution of 1917 rather wearied their audience. The delegate from Kazakhstan—to take one example—said that the Revolution had brought freedom to the people of Kazakhstan, guaranteeing human rights and making possible a great national regeneration. The Tsarists had done everything to check industrialization, but now Kazakhstan enjoyed one of the most advanced industrial economies in the world. Before 1917, 98 per cent of her people had been illiterate; now they were 100 per cent literate. Where formerly there had been no institutes for higher studies there were now twenty-three such academies. In time the repetition of

this theme with minor variations by the Soviet representatives made its impression and this, perhaps, was reinforced by a film show which included, amongst more cultural subjects, a full-length colour news-reel of the victory march in the Red Square on May Day 1946.

Apart from publicizing the achievements of the U.S.S.R. in every field the Soviet delegates were concerned to defeat any move towards the emergence of a continental bloc. Though the tenor of their speeches was anti-Imperialist they did not seem to have any specific target, and they were not anti-British in tone.

English was the official language of the Conference and the majority of the delegates, including virtually all those from South-East Asia, were able to speak it fluently. Some of the delegates from the Middle East and all the delegates from the Soviet Asian republics required interpreters. The practice both in plenary session and in discussion groups was for the speaker to speak in his own language, with the interpreter immediately following with an English translation. Proceedings were not slowed down as much as might be expected, partly because several of the delegates who required interpreters were able to understand English even though they could not speak it. Indeed one of the outstanding impressions left by the Conference was that English is by general consent the only possible lingua franca of Asia. It was a Soviet delegate from Georgia who observed that there existed in the world already two forms of English, one spoken in Britain, the other in the United States. 'The need was for a third, Asian English, better than either of the existing forms of this impossible language.'

The Conference threw up many personalities who seem destined to play a prominent part in Asian affairs in the coming years. Some of these personalities, such as Dr

Sjahrir, whose quiet good sense much impressed the assembled delegates, were already well known to a wider world. Others who made their mark in the Conference were Mr Wen Yuan-ning and Mr George Yeh from China; Mr Justice Kyaw Myint, the leader of the Burman delegation, a most resolute chairman, who later in the year presided at the trial of U Saw in Rangoon, Dr Abu Hanifah, leader of the Indonesian delegation and Mr Akvlediani from Georgia; Dr Hossein Sadighi from Iran who recalled the higher things of the mind in fine, mellifluous phrases, and was clearly marked out from the first as the chosen spokesman for the great ceremonial occasions; the Honourable S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike from Ceylon, later a member of the first Dominion Government of the island, and the Tibetan representatives, who were the most colourful figures in a Conference that was by no means lacking in colour. Of one of them there is a story that deserves to be told. Educated at Rugby, he preserved throughout the Conference an air of courteous, gentlemanly detachment from the seething, restless crowds of delegates from less happy lands. There was a never-to-be forgotten moment in the economic discussion Group where the validity of advanced left-wing socialist doctrine had hitherto passed unquestioned, when he walked slowly up to the dispatch box in Tibetan costume, carrying an incongruous Homburg in his hand, to answer inquiries about the sordid question of economic conditions in Tibet. After some desultory remarks he was asked, 'Who owns the land in Tibet?' 'The nobles, of course', was the reply. The Soviet interpreters worked overtime; the young Indian delegates jumped to their feet, clamouring for further elucidations, but with a dignity of which Dr Arnold would have been proud the Tibetan spokesman declined to answer; and picking up his Homburg walked with cool,

unhurried steps back to his seat. By word and action he had explained with an effectiveness that left no room for argument, that there were still large parts of Asia to which contemporary social and economic thinking is utterly and absolutely irrelevant.

In the Indian delegation were many already well known: Mr Joshi, the veteran labour leader, who presided over the group on Labour Problems; Mr Krishna Menon, later Indian High Commissioner in London; Mrs Pandit, sister of Pandit Nehru and later first Indian Ambassador to Moscow; Sardar Panikkar, Dewan of Bikaner and later first Indian Ambassador to China; and above all, Pandit Nehru. The Conference in a real sense was Nehru's Conference. None could fail to be flattered by the time he devoted to its deliberations. He was present not only in the plenary sessions but also at many of the discussion groups. He lunched at Constitution House where the Conference was held; he personally showed delegates round the Constituent Assembly. The more cynical might talk of 'Nehru fiddling while India burned', but among delegates as a whole his already high reputation was enhanced. His interventions in the discussions were uniformly helpful; his speeches in the plenary sessions were remarkable alike both for their fluency and for their consciousness of high responsibility at this critical hour in Asian history. When dangerous courses were advocated he threw his great influence on the side of statesmanlike moderation. Throughout, his personality and charm showed to great advantage, though a certain restlessness carried with it the suggestion of a man who was running the risk of over-straining himself by the weight and variety of the responsibilities he undertook. It passed through some minds that this Kashmiri aristocrat might be destined to fill the role of Kerensky in an

Indian revolution, perhaps because he gave the impression of being a man of many gifts who lacked the single-minded, narrow strength of purpose which in the past has often carried leaders safely through a revolutionary epoch.

Mahatma Gandhi, who attended the last two sessions of the Conference, was received with the reverential awe that is so rarely accorded to a prophet in his own country. Hailed as 'the beloved teacher', 'the saviour of India', 'the father of a continent', his message was a spiritual message and he recalled with pride that all the great religions of the world had come from Asia. Non-violence and love, he said, were the virtues which the East had to teach the West. In India, too, these lessons had still to be learned.

Pandit Nehru was justified in saying that the most important thing about the Asian Conference was that it was held. That in itself made it the herald of a new era in Asia. Its more detailed significance is difficult to assess, partly because the Conference, possessing no mandatory authority, reflected tendencies not yet clearly defined, rather than carefully considered opinions on future policy. However, certain practical, if intangible consequences seem clear. By recording a unanimous view that imperial rule in Asia should end, the Conference probably hastened the day of its ending. But even in the anxiety to rid Asia of colonialism the predominant impression was one of moderation, and delegates were as much concerned to consolidate the ground which had already been won as to remove the last vestiges of imperial rule. Here it was perhaps influenced by the desire to reinsure against any revival of imperial pretensions and in that respect there seems little doubt that the Conference did succeed in creating a spirit which would make it dangerous, if not impossible, for any imperial Power to try to regain what had been lost. Within the new Asia the first stage may be

merely mistrust on the part of the smaller Powers of the greater, but the next, unless wiser counsels prevail, may well be a struggle for leadership between the three Great Powers on the Asian mainland, India, China, and the Soviet Union, in which Japan might eventually play no insignificant part. An awareness of these still distant dangers underlies the contribution which the Asian Relations Organization may make to the future peace and prosperity of the continent. By bringing divisions to the surface, by encouraging a frank discussion of them, a great deal may be done to lessen or even remove their harmful consequences.

The Conference was primarily concerned with continental problems, but it was well understood that these could be viewed only in a wider context. Those States who had recently or were about to become autonomous were particularly concerned to play a part in world affairs, and the instrument that lay ready to hand was the United Nations Organization. For the time being these new recruits to the number of sovereign States think in terms of the opportunities which the United Nations Organization may afford for putting their case before the world, and not of the obligations which membership will entail. But allowing for this understandable and probably short-lived reaction, the advantages of bringing these new States into the arena of world politics are great. They have a distinctive contribution to make and their influence is likely to be pacific. From what was said at the Conference and from subsequent events, it is clear they are resolved for as long as possible to 'paddle their own canoe', and not to become tied to either of the Great Power blocs.

Though there were many criticisms of the rule of the European Powers in Asia, the political doctrines and

political practice of the Western world, and particularly of Britain, were not disregarded. At the Conference English, as has already been noted, was the recognized language; parliamentary democracy was acknowledged as the highest form of political life by all the South-East Asian countries, and the goal of a planned social democracy was accepted almost without dissent as the end for which all should strive. Future Conferences will show whether the rival system outlined with such consistency by the delegates from the Soviet Asian republics has won over many adherents.

The effectiveness of the Asian Relations Organization, in the long run, will clearly depend on the vigour of the national organizations which will work for it. The decision to hold the 1949 Conference in China, carrying as it did the implication of a peripatetic organization with no fixed headquarters—for this, geography made New Delhi the ideal site—has in effect vested final responsibility in the respective national organizations. This might prove to be a fatal source of weakness should the spontaneous enthusiasm which called the 1947 Conference into existence fade away. That is the risk involved in the decision to emasculate the central organization, but it may reasonably be hoped that it will be avoided. For if the welcome of the outside world to the Asian Relations Organization must for some time remain a trifle cautious, it should be none the less sincere, for it is only just to recognize that the organization has great potentialities for promoting peace and goodwill in the most heavily populated regions of the earth. At this stage its work is not to be judged by concrete results alone. It was Cromwell who said that no man goes so far as he who knows not where he is going. The first Asian Conference did not know precisely where it was going; still less did it reach any particular destination,

but it would not for these reasons alone be wise to conclude that it may not go a long way. And whatever the fate of the organization it has founded, the Conference did at a decisive moment in Asian history provide a platform for ideas and aspirations, many of which in the fullness of time will bear their fruit, sweet or bitter as it may be. It is these ideas and these aspirations which the Western world, and most of all the British Commonwealth, cannot afford to disregard.

THE LAST DAYS OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

Some Personal Impressions

‘THE Kings of the Earth are gathered and gone by together’, but to us, thinking upon our own mortality, the hour in which they and their empires pass away has always an irresistible fascination. Succeeding generations turn with undiminishing interest to read the *Travels* in which Arthur Young records his impressions of France in the last years of the Ancien Régime. It matters little, as we turn those pages, whether we feel that the old order merited the fate which was so soon to engulf it, or whether we feel that in the floodgates of violence and bloodshed some of the bonds that held human society together were to be broken beyond repair. It is the moment that lends all its significance to the scene. Because they lived and moved on the eve of a great revolution we are concerned to discover the thoughts, however trivial, of noble and peasant as all unknowing they moved on their way to play a part in one of the great dramas of history.

No one with a sense of historical perspective would suggest that the ending of British rule in India and the coming of the French Revolution were events of comparable magnitude. Yet it may be that the manner in which the Indian Empire passed away somewhat obscured the momentous consequences of its passing. Of that it is not possible to judge yet. But whatever the final verdict, it is

certain that in after generations men will be eager to learn something of the thoughts and actions, whether English or Indian, of those who played a part in the last days of British rule. The extraordinary, fantastic episode in human history, by which the imagination of Macaulay was so deeply stirred, has reached the end that he foresaw. The rule of a small island in the Atlantic over a vast sub-continent in the Indian Ocean for more than one hundred and fifty years, something so surprising in character that even familiarity cannot reduce it to the commonplace, has reached its inevitable close. How Arthur Young, inquisitive and purposeful, would have enjoyed noting conditions, impressions, and conversations in the years when the bonds were loosening.

One day after my arrival in New Delhi in March 1947, the last Viceroy came to take up his exacting task. The atmosphere in the capital was that of a political hot-house. Rumours, some well-founded, others fantastic, circulated everywhere. Every one was waiting—waiting for the closing scenes, impatient for the opening of a new chapter. Some were filled with curiosity, some with hope, most with a blend of hope and fear in which, at that time, fear predominated. To paint a picture of this stormy sunset scene would require an intimate knowledge of India, to which I can lay no claim. But it is my hope, that even the rather random impressions of a visitor to India at that critical time may have their own interest and, incidentally, may throw some light on the future of Anglo-Indian relations.

Events in India moved quickly in the early months of 1947.¹ On 22 January the Constituent Assembly, whose proceedings were boycotted by the Muslim League, unanimously passed a resolution declaring 'a firm and

¹ For a full account, see Mr H. V. Hodson's article in the *Annual Register*, 1947 (London, Longmans Green, 1948), p. 145.

solemn resolve to proclaim India as an independent, sovereign republic'. On 17 February Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, Finance Member in the Interim Government, stated categorically at Aligarh that only the establishment of an independent Muslim state, Pakistan, would satisfy Muslim sentiment. Three days later, on 20 February, Mr Attlee announced the definite intention of His Majesty's Government 'to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948'. The players in the last act had taken up their positions, and still more than a little incredulous, India prepared for the end of the British Raj.

It might have been supposed that the arrival in March of the last Viceroy of India would create intense popular interest in the capital. But it was not so. Outside political circles the attitude was one of apathy mingled with mild antipathy. With a certain malicious pleasure an Indian lady told me that on earlier occasions bribes had been paid out to collect cheering crowds to hail each Viceroy's arrival. But whatever the reason, this time there were no crowds, little excitement and a good deal of indifference in the welcome. Lord Mountbatten's popularity was not inherited; it was personally acquired.

Lord Wavell's farewell broadcast, so sincere, so obviously candid, was something by which Indians were moved. But those in touch with affairs were all agreed that the time had come for change. Lord Wavell was said to be tired; to be weighed down by a feeling of frustration; his outlook to be too inflexible. Although he had been Viceroy for a comparatively short time if one thinks in terms of years only, he had been there in a political sense through a long, exacting period. Even his virtues at this juncture weighed against him. When the problem had demanded immediate practical action, as in the days of

the Bengal famine, and had been less exclusively political, his contribution was acknowledged to have been great; but now that the only question was the best way in which power could be quickly transferred he was not felt to have the right touch. Some Indian critics maintained that in recent months negotiation was slowed down because he had leaned too heavily on his professional advisers. At Cabinet meetings his strong but silent personality was unequal to the very formidable task of bridging the gulf between the representatives of the two major communities. Here Lord Mountbatten's diplomacy and understanding brought about a quick change for the better. His chairmanship of the meetings of the short-lived Interim Government was recognized at once to be masterly. Under his happy influence this Interim Government, for the first time, began to bear some resemblance to a Cabinet as it is understood in a Parliamentary democracy. Lord Mountbatten diplomatically guided where Lord Wavell correctly presided.

Mr Attlee's declaration of 20 February had transformed the political atmosphere in India and made change in the highest office seem natural and appropriate. However criticized at home, the impact of this statement of policy on India was wholly beneficial. At no time during my stay did I hear any criticism of its substance, though one or two of the Muslim leaders argued that the period allowed before the final withdrawal of the British Raj might with advantage to them have been rather longer. It gave them insufficient time to lay the foundations of a new State. Since in fact this period was foreshortened by nearly a year, their observations underline the difficulties confronting Pakistan in the early months of its existence. The Europeans joined in acclaiming Mr Attlee's wise and prudent decision. Nothing indeed was more surprising than

the support which the policy of the Labour Government in this respect received from all classes of the British community, who were certainly not otherwise predominantly Labour in sympathy. Responsibility without power is not an enviable situation, and had the transfer been long protracted, that is the fate which would certainly have overtaken the army and administration.

The Indian scene in the spring of 1947 was clouded by the extreme tension between the two major communities. It was a matter of no little surprise that a situation could simmer for so long and yet not boil over. No subject could be discussed; no serious consideration given to the future of India, to the direction of her internal or foreign policy when independence was won; no study of her future relationship with Britain and the Commonwealth undertaken, without bringing out at once this one great unresolved problem. All were preoccupied with the balance of communal forces within India. During the period of the Asian Conference the Congress Party, by the array of eminent intellectual figures it could muster, was able to present an impressive front. It was made clear that on the intellectual side the advantage lay with it; and it was clear as well that so far as finance and industrial resources were concerned its position was overwhelmingly strong. When to those assets was added its great advantage in numbers, it was not surprising that the Congress leaders, particularly those of the second rank, disregarding the restraint and dignity of Pandit Nehru, allowed a note of arrogance to intrude, in which they benefited neither themselves nor their cause.

Ardent members of Congress and of the League both spoke freely about the possibility of civil war. At times they shrank from so awful an eventuality, but at times, too, the question that seemed uppermost in their minds

was not whether civil war would come but who would win it. Many of the younger generation, notably the younger intellectuals, were resigned to the settlement of the issue by the sword. Better a country united by force than the vivisection of Mother India, was the thought, sometimes candidly expressed by young Hindus. Warning of the long, incalculable consequences of civil war, illustrated by what had happened in Ireland on a comparatively small scale a quarter of a century ago, was something which the younger generation were not prepared to heed. If they learn, they will learn only by experience. It was in Bombay, far removed from the probable scene of conflict, that the most intolerant views found expression. There, too, was to be found some impatience with Mahatma Gandhi's faith in non-violence. By not a few wealthy Hindus it was felt that Gandhi's doctrine had served its day. Warm though the tributes might be to the unique contribution which Gandhi had made to the Indian national movement, it was felt the time had now come when he should stand aside. There was no longer, so it was argued, any alternative to fighting it out because by this means alone could the partition of India be averted. Something of the single-minded passion which prompted such conclusions came to the surface when a Hindu Congress business man denounced in the most bitter terms the presence of the 'Third Party' in India; a 'Third Party' by whose intervention and by whose intrigues every reasonable hope of a peaceful settlement had been destroyed. Asked to identify the 'Third Party', he replied in surprise, 'The Muslims, naturally'.

The feeling on the part of the Congress supporters that they had the men, the money, and the industrial resources constituted an ever present incentive to settlement by the sword. It was in the light of this clear predominance in

power that there was endless discussion of the role the Army might play. The possibility of a military *coup d'état* was by no means excluded among the well informed. It was, however, the belief of experienced soldiers that, in fact, the Indian Army was a unity. It could not be split up into its component communal parts, and thereby provide the nucleus of both a Hindu and a Muslim fighting force. The units were so intermingled that to carry out such a division effectively was utterly impracticable. At this time the continued immunity of the Army to communal sentiment remained the one great reassuring factor which seemed at the least to rule out the possibility of civil war on an organized scale.

Turbulence and disorder seemed certain. On this score no one was prepared to discount the fears so widely entertained. That India was psychologically both prepared and fearful of civil war was not in doubt, and it was only the military considerations referred to above and the safety valve created by vast size and indifferent communications that provided counterbalancing factors. Incidents in the Punjab were a daily occurrence, though the Government of India censors played down their number and concealed the identity of the perpetrators. But knowledge existed and speculation was rampant. Terrible, but characteristic, was the story of the women in a village in the Gurgaon district not far from Delhi who, rather than fall into the hands of their assailants by whom their menfolk had been killed or overcome, threw themselves down the communal well. Of the ninety, all were drowned save three who survived only because the water was not high enough. But these incidents, frightful as they were, were quite insufficient to check the hand of the fanatics. And there was a widespread feeling, which in the light of after-events must honestly be recorded, that in the Punjab the Sikhs

were spoiling for a fight, and whatever happened elsewhere, there serious trouble was hardly to be avoided. Where ultimate responsibility lay was a question on which opinion was sharply divided.

The reactions arising from the growing communal tension were too many to recount. But one or two ordinary, personal experiences may convey an impression of the atmosphere for those not in India at that time. I was taken one evening to hear Mahatma Gandhi speak at his prayer meeting in Bhangi Colony in Old Delhi by a Congressman of the older generation. Throughout the drive there the taxi driver, a Sikh, continued to express his fears lest we should not be back before the curfew, though in fact it was still quite early afternoon, and the curfew was not at that time imposed till seven o'clock. These misgivings communicated themselves to some extent to my companion, who knew, as we all did, that Gandhi's last three prayer meetings had been broken up by Hindu protests at readings from the Koran, on the ground that it was by the teachings of the Koran that Muslim intolerance was fostered and sanctioned. On this particular evening there was a fairly large crowd and after being introduced to the visitors, Gandhi came out to address the meeting. Those who had protested on the preceding evenings, made statements in which they said that while they thought their protests justified they would, out of respect for Gandhi, withdraw. This was conciliatory enough but my companion was not prepared to stay. The sense of strain, of tension not very far from breaking point, communicated itself to him, purposeful and determined though he was. Nothing in fact did happen that evening.

In the cities Muslims and Hindus were keeping strictly to their own quarters. In many areas it was literally as much as life was worth for Hindus to go to a Muslim

quarter or for Muslims to go to a Hindu area. This meant in many cases that neither were prepared to cross the street. In Bombay the banks depended upon Parsee messengers who could go into all quarters without danger. It was the same factor, and not large-scale conversions to Christianity, that accounted for the wearing of so many crosses—a device which did not carry immunity for long.

Another result of the same tensions was seen in the pronounced, if in the circumstances surprising, popularity of Europeans and particularly of British people in these last days of imperial rule. It was perhaps fears of the future that were finding an outlet in an emotional friendship for the Raj which was leaving. In Bombay there were many stories of prominent Congress business men inviting English residents to propose them for membership of clubs, which would have been inconceivable a year or so earlier. In areas where rioting had been continuous and even while rioting was going on, care was taken to ensure that the lives and property of English people remained untouched. For more concrete considerations British troops were welcomed wherever they went, and in Calcutta it was said that any Tommy taking up his position outside an Indian merchant's house was certain to be offered a handsome bribe to stay where he was and not to move on next door! But it would be as much a mistake to take these tributes over-seriously as to discount them altogether. They were, however, sufficiently widespread for Gandhi at one of his evening prayer meetings to warn people against indulgence in unworthy thoughts of asking the British to remain so that their lives and property might be kept safe. It was a fear, in the circumstances a very natural fear, for the safety of personal property after the British withdrawal that contributed most to the prevailing state of mind. The anxieties, particularly of business

men, were many and widespread. Several admitted that their highest hope, like that of the Abbé Siéyès in the French Revolution, was to survive the storm which all foresaw. When keeping safe the property of a firm was a main objective, business was inevitably slowed down, and the conviction spread that the course of wisdom was to limit commitments to an absolute minimum. Long-term contracts were entered into with readiness only with some of the States, particularly Hyderabad, where to judge by conversations in Bombay business circles, planning for the future was continuing on a considerable scale, irrespective of conditions elsewhere in India.

Within Congress itself there was much discussion on whether the Congress Party should continue to exist after British rule had ended, or alternatively, at what stage the Congress would split into its component parts. There was no doubt that the younger Congress men, some of them terribly conscious of the wretched poverty of the Indian masses, were extremely restive under the higher command of a party which was so largely financed and therefore controlled by Hindu big business. Many of them sponsored the view that the final struggle might be diverted into a class struggle, in which the Muslims, being generally the poorer element, would link up with the Hindu Socialists. It was reluctantly recognized, however, that this Socialist programme could have no decisive appeal until communal passions had abated. But, on the other hand, the concentration of enormous wealth in a few hands, which is so remarkable a feature of Indian economy, seems to make it inevitable, even allowing for the dead weight of inertia, that at some not too distant stage a social revolution must come. There the Congress Socialists seem right, but their calculation of the day when it will come may prove wide of the mark. In the Interim

Government and in the Congress Party there was no more impressive figure than Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, whose realism and ruthless sense of purpose made him a formidable defender of the *status quo*. Nothing was more remarkable in the spring of 1947 than the steady rise in his reputation among both friends and opponents. By his speeches he made it clear that he knew precisely what he wanted when India was free—and it was not a social revolution.

The activities and the interests of the Congress leaders were diverse; those of the Muslim League were concentrated wholly on the creation of a Muslim State. It was at once their strength and their weakness that they had to concentrate on one single aim. If Pakistan did not come into existence, all their wider plans were by that very failure rendered meaningless. And yet if Pakistan did come into existence, all these questions hitherto disregarded had to be disposed of urgently. Mr Jinnah, as constant in saying 'no', with a resolution as unyielding as that of Lord Craigavon, was reaping the reward of a man of single-minded vision. It was clear beyond question by March 1947 that he would get Pakistan, since he was absolutely determined to get it, and he had sufficient cards in his hand to make any alternative unworkable. This indeed was reluctantly recognized in private conversation by Congress men, and the practical issue was in fact, if not in name, whether Mr Jinnah would get Pakistan 'viable' or 'truncated'. In March 1947 the latter seemed much the more likely. To that extent, therefore, there was more agreement on the fundamentals of the solution that, however reluctantly, had to be accepted, before Lord Mountbatten began his talks than was recognized outside India. Earlier and seemingly fruitless discussion had in fact narrowed the issue, and in so doing

prepared politically conscious India for the partition of the sub-continent.

Though it was tacitly acknowledged by Congress that the detachment of Pakistan was inevitable, the leaders of the Muslim League were devoting less thought than was altogether prudent to the future constitution, administration, and policy of the new State. To this Mr Liaquat Ali Khan was an honourable exception; at least in some fields of internal policy. At a time when his budget proposals were still a source of friction in the Interim Government and a source of embarrassment to the right wing of Congress, he made it abundantly clear that his aim was the creation of a better balanced social system. Recognizing that in India there is not only an appalling contrast between wealth and poverty, but also, if incidentally, that wealth is concentrated, even in the predominantly Muslim areas, mostly in the hands of Hindu merchants, he had no difficulty in deciding that it was right and just that it should be redistributed. If it is true that the Hindus comprise the wealthier part of the community, it is equally true, argued Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, that in any redistribution of wealth in India as a whole the Hindus will benefit most, just because there are most of them. Among the rank and file of the League, as distinct from Mr Jinnah, these indications of a progressive policy were highly popular, for while the Indian Muslim has a firm belief in private property, he does not believe in a wide gulf between the rich and the poor.

Though Pakistan would be poorer in resources than the Union of India, there was no lack of confidence about its capacity to pay its way. It was acknowledged that much of the wealth in Pakistan would be in the hands of the Hindus, but it was felt that Muslims in their own State, enjoying a fair deal and more opportunities, would

increasingly enter into commerce and industry. Provided there was peace in India as a whole the Muslim leaders had no doubt that financial stability in Pakistan would be maintained. Some of the provinces are wealthy in resources and it is a food producing area.

A far more pressing problem than that of social policy or even financial stability, was the question of the administrative organization of the embryo state of Pakistan. What the Muslim leaders had in mind at that time was a close federation between East and West Pakistan with a capital in each but a unified system of government, of social services, and of taxation. By some it was thought possible that one capital would be administrative and the other parliamentary, but Mr Jinnah by temperament and conviction inclined towards a strong centralized system. But little or no progress had been made with plans for organizing the life of the new State. The principle of Pakistan had first to be acknowledged; then the boundary had to be decided, and not till June 1948 would the new State be formally established. It was only when agreement was reached and the time-table telescoped that the full consequences of the lack of detailed preliminary planning became evident.

In March 1947 the League was satisfactorily holding its position, emphatic in its insistence that there had never been one India, that unity was the creation of the British Raj, and that if Hindu rule were to be forced upon them a civil war more terrible than any in the history of Asia would ensue. To avoid war, not only must partition be accepted in principle, but also power must be handed over to two separate authorities equally. The onus was firmly placed on the British Government. They must decide, and in so doing they must recognize that there must be two Constituent Assemblies, one to draft a con-

stitution for Hindustan, one for Pakistan. It was by this insistence on the transfer of power to two recognized successor States and by their unquestioned resolution to risk all in civil war rather than accept the Hindu Raj, that the League made any other settlement seem impracticable even to the most bitter opponents of its pretensions.

Because of its geographical position, the future relationship of Pakistan with the British Commonwealth was recognized to be a matter of cardinal importance. The view that prevailed among the leaders of the League may be summarized as follows. In the world today association, or close co-operation with a Great Power is a virtual necessity. There are only three Great Powers. The Soviet Union is an uncertain factor and her materialism is repugnant to Muslims. We have seen a certain amount of the United States in recent years. Their soldiers came to India and they went away again. We do not dislike them, we just feel that we have nothing in common. Therefore we are likely to think first of Britain as an associate since we know her. Once Pakistan is established, arrangements can be made to cover all security questions on a broad reciprocal basis.

The younger Muslims perhaps entertained some reservations in respect of their leaders' views about Russia. They seemed to feel that the Soviet Union was a difficult but not impossible associate in certain circumstances. Some were mildly impressed by the fact that the Soviet Asian Republics' delegations to the Asian Conference contained Muslims, some part of whose assertions about religious liberty in the Soviet Union may have been true. It was possible, too, that either deliberately or sub-consciously some Muslims, sensing the relative weakness of Pakistan and the vulnerability of the Arab League States, who are its natural allies, felt that the possibility of

a *rapprochement* with the U.S.S.R. was a not ineffective, if dangerous, bargaining counter not to be too lightly cast aside.

The attitude towards Britain varied less than one might have expected between the two communities. The Hindus were on the whole more conscious alike of Britain's misdeeds in the past and of the positive, if limited, contribution which she might make in the future. Neither seemed profoundly concerned about Britain's place in the world of Great Powers and one heard little of the discussion, all too familiar elsewhere, about Britain's strength in relation to the U.S.S.R. and the United States. Despite the Constituent Assembly's resolution of 22 January in favour of a sovereign, independent republic, there seemed to be a surprisingly large crop of *arrière-pensées* about it. There was a good deal of emphasis on the fact that anyway there was no free choice, because clearly India could not be a member of a Commonwealth in which South Africa was a partner. Symptomatic of these feelings were the large notices in the leading hotel in Bombay saying 'No South Africans admitted here'. On the other hand a treaty relationship not only with Britain but also with Australia, New Zealand, and Canada was widely contemplated. A very particular interest was taken in recent constitutional developments in Eire, and the merits of external association were receiving detailed consideration. The Committee drafting the new constitution had devoted the most careful study to the Irish Constitution of 1937. On the broad question of relationship with the Commonwealth it seemed that the sensitiveness of the Congress leaders to attacks from the left, whether nationalist or socialist, might be a decisive factor in favour of independent republican status. Certainly it made Dominion status politically unattractive.

In contrast to the League, Congress was confident that the Union of India would be sufficiently strong to stand on its own feet, and so far as a treaty was concerned felt that Britain might well be allowed to make the pace. It had not occurred to Congress, but it had occurred to the League, that the commitments which Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth might be asked to undertake in a divided India would be disproportionate to the political and strategic advantages which she might thereby acquire.

The British community in India faced bravely the 'sad sundown' of the British Raj. In the capital, families of officials were packing up; many reluctantly returning to Labour Britain, with whose political and social outlook they were not at all in sympathy. There was a round of farewell parties, and, though in many cases the men were expected to remain for six or nine months longer, their families were going home as berths became available. And this inevitably had a very disintegrating effect outside official circles. In Bombay it was marked. Only in Calcutta did it seem the firm intention of the business community to stay put. It was the assumption there that while the first three to five years might be a difficult period, normal trading conditions would return at the end of them. It was particularly noticeable in these last days of British rule that the morale of the I.C.S. as an administrative service was undermined. Whatever views might be entertained in London it was perfectly clear that machinery no longer existed in India by which any policy other than that adopted by the United Kingdom Government could be carried out.

The departure of the British community must profoundly affect the future of the Christian Churches in India. Some believe that, except in South India, where their roots have struck deep, the Churches have been

fatally compromised by their association with an alien ruling class. Remembering that there are some eight or nine million Christians in India, it was surprising how far the Episcopalian Church, at least, had remained Anglicized. Here there is a sharp contrast with conditions in China. In India it remained till 1947 almost unknown for an English suffragan to serve under an Indian bishop. In the capital, and in the great cities the Church remains overwhelmingly European, and may well have to fight for survival. But in the villages the prospect seems much more hopeful. In general, the most probable outcome is that the Church will be confronted within the next two or three years after the ending of British rule by a testing, critical period, and if, as there is every reason to suppose, it survives, then it should have great opportunities for service in the future. While most recent converts are drawn from the two extremes of the social scale, the great majority come from the depressed classes. To them, to the outcast and the downtrodden, its message of hope will always remain.

If, and when, the Residency Churches are wholly Indianized the memorials which cluster so thickly upon their walls will presumably one day be removed. Many of these memorials are in the most elaborate Victorian style, but on them is recorded information of much historical interest. By the porch in the Cathedral at Bombay my eye chanced to rest on one tablet erected to the memory of the crew of 'the East India Company's frigate *Cleopatra*, lost in a storm off the coast of Malabar 1853'. Beside it was another memorial to a young lieutenant in the Royal Engineers, who, working on the fortifications at Fort Bombay through the noonday heat with 'a characteristic devotion to duty', had 'died of sunstroke'.

What strikes the traveller in India most is its dreadful poverty. In the great over-populated cities it is always

evident, but in the myriads of villages of the central plains it is overwhelming. Many Indian nationalists suggest that British rule has been responsible; that by paying too much attention to big business, because that was the only way in which Indian opinion might indirectly be influenced and Indian economy controlled, it allowed the wealth of the country to be accumulated in a few hands. It is also argued more realistically that by a reluctance to interfere with local customs, many survived under British rule which are a burden and a drag on economic development. Others again acknowledge that, while British rule had brought great benefits to India up to about the close of the last century, 'then something had gone out of us'. Is this true? Remembering at once the vast size of India and its ever growing population, the initial surprise is that the administration of this sub-continent could have been carried out at all with the limited, and in the last years, dwindling resources at the disposal of the British Raj. That in itself has been no mean achievement. On the other hand an Indian Government with far greater resources, particularly in man-power, at its disposal clearly could embark on a positive economic policy of the kind from which we shrank. It is not, perhaps, a case of 'something going out of us' but a case in which the negative functions of administration could be, and were admirably, enforced with the resources at the disposal of a foreign ruler, but that the positive planning on social and economic lines, which was the next stage, was beyond our power. Britain's mission, so it had always been conceived, was to pacify India; to unite it; to introduce law and order in a sub-continent where hitherto they had never been respected. When all that had been accomplished the sense of mission weakened. Never had it been conceived as Britain's task to introduce a more just social system, to embark upon the

perilous enterprise of reforming an Eastern society on an advanced Western model. To have attempted this would have demanded faith and a burning conviction in the excellence of the Western social system in its industrial age. But such faith did not exist, could not exist. What did remain was the Englishman's profound belief in the 'government of men by themselves'. That belief was all too often blurred by preoccupation with considerations of power or economic advantage, or even of security, and the principal criticism to be made of the last years of British rule in India is, that it was not always true to itself, true to its own most cherished principles. It is on almost every count a profound misfortune that the transfer of power did not take place a generation earlier.

However high its intentions, however excellent its administration, however just in its dealing with the ruled, the government of one country by another exacts no small price from the rulers. They are cut off from the movement of thought and opinion in their own land, and only too often from free, fertilizing interchange of ideas with the inhabitants of the country they rule. So long as their principal task is the maintenance of law and order, the administration of justice, their loss in freshness of outlook is not apparent. But once the discharge of more creative responsibilities is demanded, it becomes so. In respect of the Indian Civil Service this did not escape the discerning eye of James Bryce on his brief visit to India some sixty years ago. 'The Civil Service', he wrote,¹

somewhat disappoints me. There is a high average of ability among the service men in the upper posts—'tis these chiefly I have seen—but a good deal of uniformity, and a want of striking, even marked, individualities.

¹ Letter to his Mother, 20 November 1888; quoted in H. A. L. Fisher, *James Bryce* (London, Macmillan, 1937), Vol. I, pp. 259-60.

They are intelligent, very hard working, with apparently a high sense of public duty and a desire to promote the welfare of the people of India. But they seem rather wanting in imagination and sympathy, less inspired by the extraordinary and unprecedented phenomena of the country than might have been expected, with little intellectual initiative; too conventionally English in their ways of life and thoughts to rise to the position. . . . They are more out of the stream of the world's thought and movement than one was prepared to find. Society is monotonous; it is in some places more military than civil, in some more civil than military; it has nowhere the variety and sense of intellectual activity which one feels in England. . . .

All that could have been written with at least equal truth of the Europeans in the largely Indianized Service in 1947. By then the lack of contact with opinion at home had been accentuated, largely because for the past twenty years, while opinion was moving to the left in Britain, recruits with left-wing opinions did not for the most part come forward as candidates for the Indian Civil Service. The predominant outlook was that of an earlier age hardened in its ways of thought by antagonism to the rising tide of nationalism in India and of socialism in Britain.

Many Congress men, particularly the young left-wing group, feel that they have quick and easy remedies for the poverty of India. On them Gandhi's dislike of industrialism has made no impression. Their thoughts run along the lines of social, democratic planning now fashionable in Western Europe. Often they seem almost oblivious both of the way of life in India's unnumbered villages, and of her predominantly agricultural economy. Here they had much to learn, both from Gandhi and from Nehru. It is only necessary to go for a short tour in central India; to visit some of the farms, for ever being sub-divided, and

watch methods of agriculture, which must have been practised for at least 2000 years, to recognize that the solution is not so easy as all that. The small farms; the thoroughly wasteful methods of cultivation—I remember watching eight oxen yoked together tramping round and round threshing corn—the lack of proper water supplies, and above all the innumerable herds of useless cattle, impress on one's mind a picture of how very, very much there is to be done before the means of subsistence can keep pace with the rise in population. It is generally calculated that there are about 150 million head of cattle in India and I can well believe that that is an underestimate. Few sights are so utterly depressing as these herds of ill-bred, ill-nourished, ill-watered oxen dragging their weary way in the noon-day heat through the parched fields of the United Provinces. Because none can be slaughtered by Hindus, many of the heifer calves never give any milk and the only profit derived from them is the shoes made from their hides when at last they die. In the meantime they hasten the process of soil erosion which in some places reaches terrifying proportions.

It is easy for any one visiting India at this particular time to be unduly depressed. It is true that in the period of marking time, corruption and a degree of administrative disintegration were noticeable. But new forces of great vitality, with idealism and determination to compensate for lack of wide experience, were waiting to take over. Moreover, it is a naïve Western reaction to imagine that because corruption is widespread the administration will necessarily break down altogether, or indeed to think that life itself is dependent on the working of an administrative machine. Even when there is fairly large-scale disorder, life in large parts of India remains comparatively unaffected, provided—and this is all-important—that

food can be moved from surplus areas to over-populated famine areas. Fear of complete breakdown may be discounted. In India it is a case of nothing being quite so good or quite so bad as it seems at first sight.

So small a proportion of India's vast population is politically conscious that, to an extent greater than Westerners find it easy to believe, the future of the sub-continent is likely to depend on the quality of the leaders which she brings forth. In 1947 the scene was dominated by Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah, with Vallabhbhai Patel and Liaquat Ali Khan exerting ever increasing influence. The Sikhs lacked effective leadership; that was their tragedy.

In this, the last year of his life, Gandhi's influence was transcendent. By the people of India he was treated with the awe given to the great prophets and religious teachers of the past. Indeed he was already numbered with them. It was his preaching of the doctrine of non-violence more than any other single factor that stood between India and bloodshed on a frightful scale. To a European the happiest verdict on Gandhi may seem to have been that of Mr Casey, who has written that 'among statesmen he is a saint; among saints he is a statesman'. But to simple and sincere Indians he was just a saint. As his inclinations seemed to lead him to withdraw more and more from the narrow political issues of the hour and to devote his efforts to the noble work of pacification, so his reputation grew, even if some of his early and more militant followers wavered in their allegiance. Bitterly opposed to the 'vivisection of Mother India', he remained the great protector of those who demanded it. It was this that the Hindu extremists could not forgive. Recently returned from his exacting and successful mission to the troubled area of Bihar, he was received at the Asian Conference with

reverent and profound respect. Leaning on his pillows, with Pandit Nehru holding the microphone before him, Gandhi spoke to the assembled delegates less of the practical problems of the new Asia than of her age-old spiritual heritage. 'We do not', he said referring to the disturbances in India,

know how to keep the peace within ourselves. We think we must resort to the law of the jungle. It is an experience which I would not like you to carry to your respective countries. We want to be our own masters. Man is supposed to be master of his own destiny, but it is only partly true. He can make his own destiny only in so far as he is allowed by the Great Power which overrides all our intentions and plans. . . . I call that Great Power not by the name of Allah, not by the name of Khuda or God, but by the name of Truth. For me Truth is God and truth overrides all our plans. . . . A great Englishman taught me to believe that God is unknowable. But he is knowable if only to the extent that our limited intellect allows.

The deep impression which he made upon the delegates, most of whom were not destined to hear him again, is something not easily described.

It was Lord Halifax 'the Trimmer' who said that the dependence of a great man upon a greater was a thing not to be readily understood by ordinary men. While Pandit Nehru was always the devoted disciple of Gandhi, there was in the relationship no hint of dependence. Nehru, endowed with all the charm of a gifted and popular aristocrat, is the leader born. He has the assurance of one accustomed to command, coupled with some impatience at the criticisms of colleagues. Equally at ease in addressing vast popular meetings and small gatherings of learned men, his eloquence is easy, often inspiring, with a capacity

for rising to the great occasions, and fluent—perhaps too fluent. Somewhat incalculable he remains, but his stature has grown steadily with his responsibilities. Of the wide range of his interests and his intellectual ability there is no doubt. Perhaps he insists a little too much that he is a man of action, for one is left with the impression of a dual personality, and with the feeling that he himself has not quite succeeded in resolving this dualism to his own satisfaction. He has a very profound sense of history, though he is not a historian and does not apply critical historical standards. He delves into the past for inspiration and for ideas, but always applying the practical standards of a statesman. His principal criticism¹ of Akbar the Great is directed to his failure to remedy India's powerlessness at sea. With all his prestige as the Grand Moghul, with his genius for invention, with all his might on land, Akbar left his dominions defenceless against the Portuguese who were masters of the sea. India's greatness in earlier ages had been partly at least due to her control of the sea-routes, and Nehru's awareness, through his study of history, of the impact of sea-power on her destiny in the past will assuredly influence his naval policy in the future. He is also profoundly convinced of the 'spiritualism' of the East which he contrasts obliquely with the materialism of the West. In religion as in politics finalities do not appeal to him. It may be that the wide range of mind and of his cultural and political interests will prove a source of weakness at critical moments, though undoubtedly it adds to the charm of his personality and fits him to play the role in international affairs to which he aspires and which he might fill with high distinction.

Like other Indian leaders Pandit Nehru's life has been spent in a struggle to end British rule in India. At times he

¹ *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta, The Signet Press, 1946), p. 221.

is bitter. A man who has spent so many years of his life in prison would require a remarkable degree of detachment to feel otherwise. Of India he thinks emotionally and the outlet for his emotion has been nationalism. 'Nationalism', he has written, 'was and is inevitable in the India of my day: it is a natural and healthy growth. For any subject country national freedom must be the first and dominant urge, for India with her intense sense of individuality and past heritage it was doubly so.'¹ Further, his experience has moulded his outlook as well as those of the other Congress leaders. That is something never to be overlooked. It is a fact which must influence India's future relationship with the Commonwealth. Vision on both sides is needed to transcend the memories of the past, and coupled with it a new realistic approach to the problems of the future. If this will not always be easy, at least it will be helped by the fact that under difficult circumstances the parting was both peaceful and friendly. For that, a high tribute may fairly be paid to the wisdom and understanding of English statesmanship—and of her last Viceroy—at a most critical hour.

For many years to come Englishmen and Indians will think very differently of British rule in India—not merely of the great dividing issues which clouded its closing days, but also of smaller, apparently less significant, factors. Has India, to take one example, even yet come to regard New Delhi, so spaciouly and delightfully planned, as its own? I think not. I remember—if I may recall a personal incident, because it brings out something on which we should do well to ponder—driving with one of the Congress leaders up the long vista to the Secretariat and Legislative Assembly and his asking me what I thought of Sir Herbert Baker's masterpiece. Never having quite made

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 33.

up my mind about it, I merely remarked that I thought the vista very fine. My companion commented, slowly as though he were seeing it for the first time, 'Yes, it is a fine vista.' There was a longish pause and then he went on as though I were no longer there: 'but the buildings; they are imposed!' How many things that we have done in India, excellent in themselves, must seem to Indians to have been imposed. That is something for Englishmen to remember and for Indians to forget.

VI

BRITAIN, RUSSIA, AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

SOUTH-EAST Asia, like Europe and the Far East, suffered greatly from the wounds of war, but unlike them its recovery was not dependent upon the terms of Peace Treaties. In this area change was imposed not from without by the victors, but from within by forces released in the convulsions of war. None the less, the future there is being profoundly influenced by one most significant external factor—a vacuum in power. The defeat of Japan, civil war in China, the partition of India, the withdrawal of Imperial power from Burma, the challenge to its authority in Indonesia and Indo-China; all combined to create this vacuum. There remains today on the Asian mainland only one Great Power with the resources and the ambition to fill it: the Soviet Union. So long as China remains divided by civil war and the sub-continent of India afflicted by the stormy aftermath of partition, Russia remains the one force capable of achieving a settlement on the continent of Asia in accordance with her own wishes. Less directly threatened than the North-East, South-East Asia remains a field in which Russian political influence is potentially great. Geographically it is true that the Soviet Union is far removed, a distant and incalculable force, and equally it is true that representatives of the Soviet Republics at the Inter-Asian Conference and at other conferences in India have seemed intent on little more than political exploration. But it is not perhaps

so much a question of Russian intentions as of force of circumstances. Other Powers in other days have often been drawn with genuine reluctance into a policy of intervention in areas where a vacuum in power existed.

Despite the spectacular defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, her advance across the mainland of Asia has been remarkable and consistent over a period of the last eighty years. When in 1889 Lord Curzon observed the results of Russian expansion in Central Asia,¹ he was deeply impressed with 'the great and substantial advantages upon the central Asian regions' which Russia had conferred; with the fact that Russian government was 'both firmly and fairly established and loyally accepted by the conquered races', and with the overpowering military strength of Russia which 'must be held to detract somewhat from the brilliance of her achievement'. One thing he emphasized above all others. There was in Central Asia a conviction of the permanence of Russia and Russian conquests. A forward movement, whether voluntarily undertaken or beneath pressure of circumstances, 'is seldom repented of and never receded from. No return tickets are issued to a primitive foray of Cossacks. Advance is inexorably followed by annexation'. Russian rule in Asia, unlike British rule in India, or Dutch rule in the East Indies, has always been invested with an air of finality. That is an important and lasting factor in the development of Asia.

If Lord Curzon viewed the steady, persistent advance of Russia in Asia with critical detachment, it was hailed with less critical enthusiasm by the Kaiser. In a private letter to the Tsar, dated 26 April 1895,² he wrote: 'It is clearly the

¹ Hon. G. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia* (London, Longmans Green, 1889), Chapter X.

² *Die Grosse Politik*, Vol. IX, p. 359. The letter was written in English.

great task of the future for Russia to cultivate the Asian Continent and to defend Europa from the inroads of the Great Yellow Race. In this you will always find me at your side ready to help you as best I can. You have well understood that call of Providence; it is of immense political and historical value. . . . Sincere the Kaiser probably was in his pathological fear of the domination of the 'Yellow Races', though he thought there was nothing inappropriate in coupling his good wishes for the expansion of Russia's dominions in Asia with an ingenuous plea for the acquisition of a port somewhere in the Far East, that did not conflict with Russian claims. Later, the Kaiser's preoccupation with the 'Yellow Peril' evoked a not unsympathetic response in the United States, whose primary interest was the maintenance of a balance of power in the Far East.

In 1904, in the early stages of the Russo-Japanese War, the German Ambassador reported that both President Roosevelt and public opinion in the United States were 'deeply suspicious' of Russia's policy of aggrandizement in the Far East and were prepared to regard any extension of her power there as 'a great danger'. China under Russian influence, it was felt in America, would be far more dangerous for Western civilization than under Japanese. These views were, however, profoundly modified on the news of Japan's resounding victories, and fear of her growing power replaced misgivings about Russia's territorial ambitions. It also afforded a strong incentive to American mediation in bringing about a peace settlement.

Two years later, in 1907, the German Ambassador discussed the situation in the Far East in detail with President Roosevelt.¹ The Ambassador voiced the belief of the German Government that Japan was 'doubtless

¹ *Die Grosse Politik*, Vol. XXV, p. 72. Translation in E. T. S. Dugdale: *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 262, *seq.*

aiming at control of the Pacific Ocean, extension of her territory southwards, and domination in China'. Symptoms of this, he argued, were to be observed directly after the war with China, but aggressive action on Japan's part was not to be expected until she had settled her large international questions, recovered from the heavy expenditure of the Russian war and was ready again for another great war. Leading military authorities, explained the Ambassador, considered that many years must pass before Japan could be ready for such a war. It was their view that the great danger of Japanese expansion would affect not only the United States, but also Japan's allies in an equal degree—England and France.

The Ambassador's analysis of future probabilities in the Far East, from which the President at least did not dissent, were more prophetic than he knew, though it is probably correct to say that he was thinking of Japan's readiness for her next major adventure in a matter of ten rather than thirty years. But what is most interesting is that there was evidently no predisposition on the part of Ambassador or President to underestimate Japan's war potential. President Roosevelt later in the conversation actually contemplated the possibility of a Japanese invasion of America, in which the American Army would first suffer a crushing blow; and only then, after a thorough army reorganization, would Japanese invading forces be annihilated and America be in a position to take her revenge. On this last possibility the Kaiser minuted: 'Very optimistic!' But whatever may be thought of these far-ranging speculations, it is at least abundantly clear that the results of the Japanese victory over Russia were not underestimated either in the Old World or the New. But only for a moment did it deflect Britain's gaze from Central Asia.

At the time the consequences of the Japanese victories

were likewise not underestimated in Britain. There was indeed no valid reason why they should be. The exposure of Russian weakness was a revelation to a country which had so long believed so profoundly in its strength. In London, both Lord Rosebery, and more important, Sir Edward Grey believed that future Japanese policy was incalculable. How little, reflected Grey uneasily, did we really know of the Japanese character.¹ But in view of greater preoccupations in Europe he was content to leave it at that, and not to try to speculate too closely about the direction of Japan's expansion in the future, or still less to assume that it would be necessary to take measures to meet it.

If to the Western world the Japanese victory was a portent, to Asia it was the symbol of revival. The Asian Conference of 1947 recognized that the origins of Nationalism in Asia were to be traced back to Japan's spectacular victory over Czarist Russia in 1905. The impression produced by the defeat of one of the Great Powers of Europe in single-handed conflict by an Asian people had never faded. It is this very fact which makes it so sobering to recall that the Japanese victory was made possible by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902—an alliance expressly designed to ensure that if war came, Russia should fight without allies. In a very real sense, therefore, there is a direct chain of cause and consequence stretching from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 to the final withdrawal of British rule from India and Burma in 1947.

To accuse British statesmen of lack of foresight is in the circumstances inevitable, but only partly justifiable. In the long run it may well be that history will show that their concern with Russian policy in Asia was, in fact, correct,

¹ cf. Sir Edward Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, 3 Vols. (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), Vol. I, pp. 114-15.

and that the fault lay in allowing what should have been a principal preoccupation to become an exclusive preoccupation. As Seeley pointed out early in the century, Britain, a sea-power elsewhere, had become a continental power in Asia. By building up the Indian Army into the finest fighting force in the East, Britain had established in her Indian Empire a land Power capable of withstanding the attack of any potential enemy in Asia. Russia was always thought of, and, on the whole, as the diplomatic documents reveal, rightly thought of, as that potential invader against whose manoeuvres it was necessary to be ever vigilant. The prolonged period of strained relations that followed the Crimean War created a habit of mind among the British rulers in Asia, little modified by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The political advisers of the Viceroy had their attention riveted on Russian penetration in Afghanistan and on the North-West Frontier where in Kipling's day there were always

‘Legends that ran from mouth to mouth,
Of a grey-coat coming, and sack of the South.’

But an attack from the East was not contemplated at all. It was not considered practicable. Japan was predominantly a sea Power, and the possibility of a land attack through South China and across South-East Asia was one that was not seriously entertained and against which no precautions were taken. The whole defence system of southern Asia was based on a different premise to meet other eventualities, including a seaborne invasion. As a result it was wholly ineffective in 1942 to withstand a land attack from the East. This again argued lack of foresight, but it was a lack of foresight which was shared by rulers and ruled alike. In 1939 Pandit Nehru wrote:¹

¹ *The Unity of India* (London, Lindsay Drummond, 1947), pp. 24-25.

Who might be the aggressor against India? It is hardly likely that any European country will embark on so rash an adventure, for each country in Europe fears its European neighbour. Soviet Russia is definitely out of the picture so far as aggression goes. . . . A Japanese invasion of India could become a practical proposition only if China has been completely crushed, and if the United States, the Soviet Union and England have all been effectively humbled. That is a large undertaking.

If Japan was responsible by example for the renewed self-confidence which preceded the upsurge of nationalism in Asia, she was also responsible by more violent action for its accentuation during the Second World War. Western critics might expose the selfish nature of Japan's Far Eastern co-prosperity effort to their own satisfaction and with perfect justice, but that was not enough to dispel the appeal of the Japanese slogan of 'Asia for the Asiatics', particularly among the smaller countries of South-East Asia. It was an emotional appeal, an appeal to national sentiment, and for that very reason a critical analysis of this kind made little impression. National sentiment has rarely shown a disposition to weigh things according to a nice logical balance. But in the long run it may well be questioned whether this appeal to nationalism in South-East Asia is likely to be to Japan's advantage. Its probable outcome is the creation of two or three powerful nationally self-conscious States in India and China, with a number of smaller national units grouped around one or other of them. It is significant that in Burma a national day of resurrection is celebrated on the anniversary of the date on which the Burma National Army, created by the Japanese, turned against them. For while the success of Japan in challenging the West evoked little but admiration, the means by which that challenge was made possible

repelled her fellow-Asians. By her imitation of Europe, Japan is felt to have lost some vital part of her Asian character, and to have assumed the air of that Western Imperialism which Asia, and especially India, resented. As the attitude of the Japanese towards their fellow-Asians became more patronizing and contemptuous so for all her military, administrative, and economic achievements her leadership became more and more unacceptable. All this makes the prospects of successful renewed Japanese aggression in the south-east very remote. For the first time an internal balance of power is likely to emerge in South and Eastern Asia, and if it does it is Japan that has called it into being. And the great continental Power of Central Asia stands outside it.

From this analysis of the shifting balance of forces in Asia, it seems far from improbable that it is the U.S.S.R. and not Japan who is likely to be the ultimate beneficiary of the great disruption of society in the East which followed from the Japanese invasions. For side by side with the national revolution in Asia has gone a social revolution. So far its progress has been slow and on the whole undramatic, but no one can doubt that with the passage of time it will gather formidable momentum. It is probably not deliberately fostered by Russia, but in so far as its fruits are gathered by an outside Power it is Russia who will garner them.

It was the Japanese invasion that gave the revolutionary social forces in South-East Asia an opportunity to establish their strength, and in some cases, to acquire power. They took advantage of the prevailing social tension between the established ruling classes, European and indigenous alike, and the vast mass of the impoverished peasantry. In Indonesia as a matter of deliberate policy, the Japanese undermined the authority not only of the

Dutch but also of the Javanese nobility. Elsewhere, more by accident perhaps than by design they overthrew the established order. By so doing they have made a return to the old social system impossible. The authority of that hierarchical order of society, which existed all over South-East Asia before the war, has been undermined, and the question is now one not so much of restoration as of replacement. And replacement has proved difficult because the thin middle-class layer has been largely destroyed. The upheaval of war, the disruption of economic life, post-war inflation, all constituted a challenge it could not meet.

The traditional social structure and social outlook in southern Asia is broken beyond repair; so much seems certain, even if there is not sufficient evidence for saying that South-East Asia is on the eve of a far-reaching social revolution. In practice it does, however, mean that the intelligentsia and the popular political parties, within A.F.P.F.L. (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) in Burma, are prepared to advocate the most far-reaching social reforms. In the conditions of South-East Asia it is not a far cry from radical reforms constitutionally enacted to revolutionary change effected by force. Here the character of Soviet communism, its dynamism, has an appeal irrespective of the precise ends it is intended to serve. Some of the reasons for this are well summarized by Mr Wint, who draws an instructive comparison between the appeal of contemporary Western political thought and that of the Marxist dialectic. What he says is:¹

It may perhaps be objected that if the soul of contemporary British civilization is described, it must necessarily be a much less exciting thing than Russian civilization to an awakening and turbulent Asia. The very description of British life may be held to show how

¹ Guy Wint, *The British in Asia* (London, Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 215.

weak will be the appeal of Britain in the coming period. The cults of law, tolerance, and 'bloodlessness' are not romantic. The British have been described recently as the 'bores of the East.' The virtues of the suburb do not impress the revolutionary. He feels that something different is demanded by the East in its present plight. Let a man visit the Indian village, or one of the spreading industrial towns such as Ahmadabad, let him see the filth, illiteracy, and stagnation and consider what organization and discipline will be required to clean the streets, house the workers, and remove the social debris of ages, and, if he has any sense of urgency about the need, he may well doubt the value of a political life regulated nicely by liberal principle, in which the government finds its hands tied by law, and the individual is free to engage in activity other than what it decrees.

Emphasis on one side of the picture unduly discounts the other. There are powerful counter-balancing forces. The strongest of them is the immobility, the inertia of Eastern peoples. In India and in all the countries of South-East Asia the peasants form the vast mass of the population. In Java, the most heavily populated region of all, 80 per cent of the people still live on the land. Though the war years increased a tendency towards urbanization, and some cities in South-East Asia, such as Rangoon, rapidly increased in size, urbanization has not taken place on a scale sufficient to modify the picture as a whole. That picture is one of a peasant society, and where a peasant society predominates, nationalism may flourish as it has in Ireland, but social change comes slowly. Moreover, so long as the national movements in southern Asia feel themselves threatened from without, it is unlikely that social divisions within will come to the surface. Nationalism continues to command the higher loyalty.

While the industrialization of central Asia may impress the peoples of the East, the curtain of secrecy that hangs over developments there is likely in time to provoke some scepticism. There is, moreover, some doubt about the relevance of Russian methods elsewhere in Asia. However much Russia may have achieved, her task in Tsarist as in Communist days has been easier than that which confronts the new national Governments in India and Pakistan and elsewhere in South-East Asia. They are faced, as Russia has not been, by a most formidable pressure of population upon resources. The 'cold heart of Asia' is thinly populated, but beyond its southern border there is a density of population greater than in any comparable area on earth. It may well be that the solution of this problem is not to be found in easy going, slow moving, liberal methods, but, equally, is violent social change ruthlessly effected likely to prove a satisfying panacea? The existence of these vast populations makes even an effective policy of ruthlessness impossible.

In assessing the relative attractions of Western and Russian political thought, it is well to remember that the former has more positive appeal than is generally allowed. There is at the moment in the Western world a lack of robust faith in Western political institutions. Too many believe that democracy is a form of government for those in easy circumstances; that it is unsuitable for export; that it is necessarily in conflict with the traditional, hierarchical systems of the East; that it cannot flourish in other than its indigenous soil. But in sharp contrast to this lack of faith in the home of democracy, the Asian Conference tacitly assumed that some form of social democracy was the goal at which the peoples of South-East Asia should aim. The new Constitutions of India and of Burma and the direction of constitutional thought in Pakistan all afford

convincing proof that the East believes that the political systems evolved by the democratic West have merits not to be lightly disregarded. And though it is the fashion nowadays to decry the importance of political institutions, the history of Western Europe in the last century and a half confirms the belief that the direction of a country's political life is in no small measure determined by the wisdom with which its political institutions have been planned. The adoption of representative, parliamentary government, of common political institutions indicating community in political outlook in the new States of South-East Asia and those of the Commonwealth is a factor of no small significance, likely to create at least a disposition towards friendly relations.

What is the foundation for continued co-operation, what are the lasting common bonds of interest between Britain, the Commonwealth, and the new nation States of South and South-East Asia? That they have long political associations, that in many respects their economies are mutually interdependent, that they have a common interest in the defence of the Indian Ocean area is all generally recognized. What is too often overlooked is their common concern in the maintenance of a balance of power throughout the whole Eurasian continent—a balance which would prevent this vast land mass being dominated by any single Power. This is an interest in which India, Pakistan, and Britain are more directly concerned than the other countries of the Commonwealth. Today it is clear that these are its most vulnerable areas. Britain has become exposed to attack as never before with the coming of atomic warfare; whilst a partitioned India, though not presenting so ideal a target for the atomic bomb, is dangerously exposed to attack by mechanized forces over her land frontiers to the north and by sea from

the west. The threat to both is latent and may effectively be countered, unless the whole Eurasian continent is dominated by a single Power. The common policy is and must therefore be to preserve 'such a just equilibrium between the members of the family of nations as should prevent any one of them becoming sufficiently strong to impose its will upon the rest'—to use in this wider context Lord Castlereagh's classic definition of the balance of power.

In the past the British Empire in Asia has papered over cracks and divisions among the countries that comprised it. Protected from without and saved from internecine feuds within, this whole area developed for the last century and a half in comparative peace and in comparative seclusion from the outside world. That protective barrier, both without and within, has now disappeared. Is there anything to replace it? While India has all the attributes of a potentially Great Power, time may elapse before she can fulfil that role. And in the interval, lured on by the existing vacuum in power, there is more than a possibility that a nationalist China may wish to consolidate her position in South-East Asia to India's disadvantage. Professor Toynbee has suggested that Malaya is likely to be the field on which the struggle of India and China for power in South-East Asia is, probably peaceably, fought out. In that struggle he feels that the long term advantages lie with China. Certain it is that the smaller States of South-East Asia, and particularly Burma who can now count on no support from the West, are singularly exposed to pressure or attack from the north. None are in a position to defend themselves, and like all small Powers in the modern world, it is likely, whatever their efforts, that they will be placed at an increasing disadvantage as against their more powerful neighbours.

The key to defence and to continued stability in the whole South-East Asia area still lies with the Indian sub-continent. Under British rule it was the keystone of the Imperial system. Without it South-East Asia is still indefensible. Conscious of this, yet reluctant to acknowledge all its implications, the new national leaders have considered the possibilities of a neutrality bloc, in itself an oblique admission of their defencelessness against attack from without. For in modern war a neutrality bloc is likely to provide only an illusion of security for the countries composing it, if, as is the case in South-East Asia, they possess in abundance the resources and raw materials indispensable to the conduct of war. In time, therefore, it may well be that the States in this area will see more and more attraction in the security that a wider defence system such as the British Commonwealth provides. Here their attitude is likely to be determined by the policy of India, and to a lesser extent, of Pakistan. Should India decide to sever all connexion with the Commonwealth, no coherent defence system backed by the resources of the Commonwealth nations, could be established in South-Eastern Asia. With Pakistan a divided country to the north, with Ceylon at the south of the Indian Peninsula, with Malaya as an outpost to the east, what remained would be of highly problematical value—a liability to the member States of the Commonwealth rather than an asset. The experience of the 1939-45 War showed only too clearly that a string of outposts, however well equipped in themselves was not equal to withstanding any determined attack.

The choice that lies before India is one which she, like Pakistan and Burma and Ceylon, will rightly make in the light of her long-term interests. She will also recognize that she has, by virtue of her geographical position and her

capacity for leadership in South-East Asia, wider responsibilities to fulfil. If there are two considerations which above all others argue in favour of co-operation with member States of the Commonwealth, they are India's lack, despite her rapid industrial development, of the technological skill without which modern war cannot be waged, and her need for stable, peaceful conditions in which to develop her resources. By free co-operation with the Commonwealth on a basis of full and equal partnership, the one vital deficiency could be remedied, and that co-operation would also, politically, be a stabilizing factor, lessening not only the risks of war but also of internal tensions within South-East Asia of the kind that might otherwise undermine India's position while she is developing her resources. Above all, co-operation with the Commonwealth would have the supreme merit of going far to restore a balance of power in Asia without which the peace and independence of its several States can hardly be maintained.

Already by treaty arrangements with Burma; by wider co-operation with Ceylon; by the restoration of Singapore, the skeleton of a defence system in South-East Asia has been put together. But it has a haphazard, unsatisfactory air. If it is to the advantage of all that a link be preserved with the Commonwealth, by which its member States implicitly underwrite the security of South and South-Eastern Asia, it should also be frankly recognized that one fundamental condition is that all the States which are to benefit maintain some form of lasting political association, however loose the ties may be. A limited treaty relationship is not enough. For while no one would wish to question the correctness of British policy in Burma or to disagree with Mr Attlee's statement that the British Commonwealth desired to have no unwilling members, it

is clear that where vital questions of strategic planning are involved, upon whose answer the safety of the whole Commonwealth depends, one cannot live from hand to mouth. The problem in South-East Asia is a regional problem. It cannot be solved piecemeal. A firm decision must be taken to co-operate in the common interests of all, recognizing that association with the Commonwealth carries obligations as well as conferring benefits, or a decision must be taken to part, and for all to go their several ways. Nothing would be worse than a short-term interim decision which encouraged the use of resources and man-power in building up a defence system which in a few years, for political reasons, no longer had any secure foundation. It is supremely important that this governing consideration should be a guiding principle in deciding the longer-term relations between the United Kingdom and India as the principal partners.

In the protracted aftermath of the Second World War it is inevitable that men everywhere should be concerned, profoundly concerned, with problems of security and defence. In determining the relations between Britain and South-East Asia such considerations will rightly play a vital, but not the decisive role. For what is fundamental is the political and even more the psychological approach. Men in the East and the West recognize that the whole pattern of their relationship has been transformed, but the old habits of mind die hard. In the West there is a resigned acceptance of change; an acute awareness of the vast economic, social, and political problems confronting the new rulers in Asia; but a wholly insufficient appreciation of the new forces in Asia, exuberant, vital, and determined to overcome all obstacles, to build up new States and to make a distinctive contribution in world affairs. In the East there is still a mistrust of the West, an inability to

recognize that Britain has peacefully abdicated her power, convinced of the virtues of national self-government, and resolved that the Commonwealth shall be a partnership of free peoples whose association would lose its distinctive virtue were compulsion applied to any member. It is these survivals from the past which on both sides hamper a frank, realistic appreciation of the needs of the future, and stand in the way of a positive approach to them. It is just such an appreciation and such an approach that the hour so imperatively demands. In the forging of a link between a multi-national Commonwealth and the national States of the East, reliance cannot be placed upon formulae, well tried though they be, designed to meet quite different circumstances. Nationalism in the East is a dynamic and may well prove a constructive and creative force. Its aims and its ideals must be frankly recognized and find their legitimate expression in the constitution of the Commonwealth, if its unity is to survive and its strength to remain unimpaired. For the repercussions to nationalism in the East are likely to extend far beyond the frontiers of Asia.

VII

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FORCES IN IRELAND 1916-48¹

IT seems at first sight a far cry from the problems of the Indian sub-continent, with its vast size, its scorched fields burnt up by a merciless sun, to those of a small island whose shores are nurtured by soft, unceasing rain. But on reflection there is at least one link—the debt which the national movements of the new Asia owe to the earlier nationalisms of the West and particularly of Ireland. In India and in Ireland also is to be found an interplay of political and social forces which have much in common, and by which the guiding principles of newly self-governing nations are largely determined. These forces at least in their earlier expression are little influenced by race, climate, or size. From an analysis of them much is to be learned that is essential to a proper understanding of the background to Anglo-Irish relations in the past quarter of a century and, incidentally, some lessons also which are not to be overlooked in considering the future relationship between India and the Commonwealth.

The fact that Ireland is small has in no way lessened the intensity of political feeling or simplified political problems. Irish politics defy simplification; they fit into no familiar pattern. As soon as one thinks even of the name of the country, something of their intricacy becomes apparent.

¹ This chapter is based upon a lecture given to the Indian Council of World Affairs in New Delhi, April 1947.

The name 'Ireland' is now a geographical expression. It is not a political reality because Ireland is partitioned, but it remains a political aspiration that will not die.

Of the two parts of Ireland, one is an autonomous republic with its capital in Dublin, externally associated with the British Commonwealth of Nations whose members, however, continue to regard it as a Dominion. It consists of twenty-six of the thirty-two counties of Ireland. The other is designated Northern Ireland and consists of the six north-eastern counties. The Constitution of 1937—the Constitution under which the twenty-six counties of Ireland are governed—proclaims that the name of the State shall be Eire, or in the English language, Ireland. Pending the 'reintegration of national territory' the Constitution recognizes that the jurisdiction of the State extends over only twenty-six of the thirty-two counties. A distinction is often drawn between 'Ireland' and 'Eire'. This is inevitable, but it is not accurate. In the same way, many people use Ulster and Northern Ireland as synonymous. But they are not. The historic Province of Ulster comprises nine counties, of which Northern Ireland includes only six. All this leads to a certain amount of confusion, from which some people have sought to escape by using the terms Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. But this is really no solution at all; partly because the most northerly county in Ireland, Donegal, is in Southern Ireland and partly because it suggests that the country is divided into two roughly equal parts, which is not the case. There is one further complication, inasmuch as from 1921 to 1937 the twenty-six counties, now popularly called Eire, were called the Irish Free State.

Political and social forces in Ireland in the years after the Second World War, are not easily to be understood without a glance first at two or three of the decisive

turning points in recent Irish history. The first, and by far the most important, was the Easter Rebellion of 1916. It was a rising organized in large measure by young intellectuals drawn from the left-wing of the national movement, who believed 'that Irish freedom would never be secured by constitutional means. Something of the wild, romantic spirit that fired them echoes still in the famous oration which Patrick Pearse pronounced over the grave of O'Donovan Rossa, that picturesque survivor of Fenian days, whose body was brought home from America to its last resting-place at Glasnevin in July 1915:

. . . This is a place of peace sacred to the dead where men should speak with all charity and with all restraint; but I hold it a Christian thing, as O'Donovan Rossa held it, to hate evil, to hate untruth, to hate oppression, and hating them, to strive to overthrow them. Our foes are strong and wise and wary; but, strong and wise and wary as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the young men of a former generation. And the seeds sown by the young men of '65 and '67 are coming to their miraculous ripening today. Rulers and Defenders of Realms had need to be wary if they would guard against such processes. Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools—they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.¹

¹ *Vide* Miss Macardle: *The Irish Republic* (London, Gollancz, 1937), pp. 139-142.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FORCES IN IRELAND

Sixteen of the leaders of the Easter Rebellion were executed for their part in the rising. Little or no hope was entertained by any of them that the rebellion would be successful, but they felt with Pearse that the rebirth of a nation could be brought about only by a 'blood sacrifice'. The Rebellion of 1916 in the long run captured the imagination of nationalist Ireland. Within three years Sinn Féin emerged into the forefront of Irish politics as a united physical force party determined to achieve national independence by armed insurrection.

On political thought the influence of 1916 has been lasting. 'Well was it said', writes Mr Churchill of the executions, 'few but corroding', which followed the Rebellion that, 'the grass soon grows over a battlefield but never over a scaffold.'¹ The 'martyrs' of Easter Week sanctified the name of the Republic and in so doing made compromise with Britain on the national issue tantamount to betrayal of the national cause. Ireland, wrote Patrick Pearse, the school-teacher son of an English Protestant father, has authorized no man to abate her demand for separation. 'The man who, in the name of Ireland, accepts as final settlement anything less, by one portion of one iota, than separation from England will be reputed guilty of so immense an infidelity, so immense a crime against the Irish Nation that it were better for that man that he had not been born.' The 1916 rising was above all a challenge to those Irishmen who believed in compromise. It was a challenge which they could not meet. History was against them. The implacable spirit of the Orangemen was against them. The attitude of successive British Governments was against them. The Nationalist Party, which had striven so long to attain Home Rule by constitutional means, was swept aside in

¹ Winston Churchill, *The Aftermath* (London, Macmillan, 1941), p. 281.

1919 by a people who, after many disappointments, had grown contemptuous of compromise. It is in that setting that Patrick Pearse's bitter words must be read. And when all desire for constitutional compromise had gone, his irreconcilable spirit still haunted, or inspired, the minds of the Sinn Féin leaders. That was their tragedy. There was within their ranks the seed of division between a right wing led by Arthur Griffith, and a militant left wing, led by Stack and Cathal Brugha.¹ Until the Treaty had been signed Michael Collins's position was more to the left and de Valera's more central than is often allowed. Under stress of circumstances the former moved to the right and the latter to the left. But had the minds of the living not been over-shadowed by the rigid, inflexible doctrines of the 'martyred' dead, that cleavage might not have led, through divided opinion and growing exasperation, to the tragedy of Civil War. In that respect at least the Congress Party in India, afflicted by the same natural and inevitable division once independence was won, inherited a less exacting past.

But if 1916 endorsed the extreme republican view of the rightful goal, it gave no clear lead on the social issue. It is, of course, true that James Connolly, in 1916, identified labour with the national struggle. Mr Sean T. O'Kelly, now President of Éire, commented later that Connolly in 1914 supplied the 'driving force' for he was filled with 'a great yearning for the freedom of his native land and for that liberty which would give a chance to Ireland to work out a worthy social system for the down trodden.'² But nationalism was not identified with labour. In 1916, and with a more marked emphasis in the Democratic

¹ Charles Burgess, a Yorkshireman of whom Frank Pakenham wrote in *Peace by Ordeal* (London, Cape, 1935), p. 95, 'for many years now' he 'had burned with the undying flame of the convert'.

² cf. Miss D. Macardle, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-9.

Programme approved by the first Dail on 21 January 1919, social, even seemingly socialist, objectives were enunciated.

We declare . . . the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland . . . and we declare that the nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the nation; and . . . that all rights of private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.

This language might be interpreted as an endorsement of a policy of State socialism. But in practice and in spirit it has not been so interpreted. The national revolution had unquestionably a subsidiary social driving force. How could it be otherwise when British rule and the landlord system had been so closely associated?

What that association had meant and the social division which it had created in many parts of the countryside have been described in felicitous phrases by M. Paul Cambon, that most gifted of diplomatists who was French Ambassador in London from 1898 to 1920, and who visited Ireland in 1900.

Il me paraît certain rien qu'à l'air général des choses que le propriétaire anglais est encore ici à l'état de conquérant. Ce domaine où je suis a été pris au commencement du XVII^e siècle par l'ancêtre de Carew qui s'est taillé à sa fantaisie un magnifique morceau. Aussi le village qui est à côté n'a-t-il aucun rapport avec le château. On s'ignore. La différence de religion est d'ailleurs un obstacle infranchissable. Les Irlandais protestants prennent vite l'air anglais. Il y a tout près d'ici un hameau protestant, c'est tout à fait un village anglais mais l'Irlandais a trop de rêve dans l'esprit pour se faire jamais protestant.¹

¹ Paul Cambon, *Correspondance*, 1870-1924 (Grasset, Paris, 1940), Vol. II, p. 49.

That was the background that promoted an uneasy coalition of national and social revolutionaries. But with the Land Act of 1903 and the later land redistribution brought about by the Land Commission, the national left and the social left drifted apart. Between them in a country of small peasant proprietors there is no natural identity. That is one of the essential facts in the Irish political scene so often misunderstood by observers, who cherish the illusion that the national left must be socially left. In Ireland, on the contrary, the extreme republican may be conservative on social problems and indeed very often is. James Connolly is honoured far more as a Nationalist than as a Socialist; he regarded himself as a Socialist who embraced the national cause. 'I think,' observed Kevin O'Higgins in a moment of irritation in the Dail, 'that we are the most conservative-minded revolutionaries that ever put through a successful revolution.' Socially that was substantially true.

If 1916 was the first, 1921 was the second seminal year in recent Irish history. Under the Treaty of 1921 the Irish Free State, comprising twenty-six of the thirty-two counties of Ireland, was constituted a Dominion. This was a compromise solution which pleased no one in Ireland. Quite apart from republican ideology, it had been apparent for a long time and more than ever apparent since the Republic had been proclaimed in 1916, that the north-eastern counties of Ireland, which were mostly settled from Scotland, would not consent to be governed from Dublin. The price of independence was partition. That there were many differences between north and south is not to be denied, and the difference in which other differences merged, and found a partly symbolic expression, was the difference in religion. The strong Protestant majority in the north-eastern counties was not

prepared to submit to 'Rome rule'. It may well be that at some moment in the past, perhaps in 1886, a compromise between submergence and separation could have been reached. But in the struggle for Home Rule, opinions on either side had hardened and each year that passed, with the future of Ireland a major source of division between the two great English parties, crystallized the rival views. Where the 'veiled exclusion' of Ulster was whispered in the corridors of Westminster in 1914, the naked partition of Ireland was enacted in 1920. Intransigence on both sides had triumphed over moderation. But it was a triumph in which neither found cause for rejoicing. 'The Act of 1920', observed Captain Redmond, 'was condemned in every corner of Ireland, and it had not even the support of a single Irish member, whether he came from the north or the south.'¹ Partition was not the policy of either the Unionist or Nationalist. But when one insisted on union and the other on separation, was there an alternative to it? That should have been one of the vital questions during the Treaty negotiations. But fundamentally it was not. A negative answer was assumed. Nothing emerges more clearly from Lord Pakenham's narrative of the Treaty negotiations² than that the unity of Ireland was used by all parties, except Lord Craigavon, who was unflinchingly opposed to it, as a starting point for manoeuvre, not as an issue for settlement.

An analogy is often drawn between the partition of India and the partition of Ireland. The analogy wears thin on close examination, and one notable difference may be noted relevantly here. Mr Jinnah's demand for Pakistan sprang from his theory of two nations. India, he maintained, is not a political unity—that was the creation of

¹ *House of Commons Debates*, Vol. 151, Col. 1408, 8 March 1922.

² *Peace by Ordeal*.

the British—it is on the contrary the geographical description of a sub-continent in which there are two nations. Very different was the premise of the Ulster Unionists. It was their contention that the British Isles were a political unity, in which Ireland was a component and integral part. Their demand was that that wider unity should be preserved, not that Ireland should be partitioned. Assured, after 1911, of the unqualified support of the Conservative Party, the Ulster Unionists lost touch with political realities. They believed that Home Rule could be indefinitely postponed because they opposed it. 'If Ulster succeeds,' said Lord Carson in Dublin on 10 October 1911, 'Home Rule is dead.'¹ It was this illusion which fostered an intransigent and negative attitude of the kind which found expression in the *non-possumus* attitude adopted by the Ulster representatives at the National Convention in 1917. Instead of preserving what might have been preserved of the unity of the British Isles by a policy of conciliation and reasonable compromise, they adopted and pursued a policy which quite inevitably led to partition of their own island, which was not their professed aim.

At the same time Sinn Féin, convinced that by physical force alone could national self-government be extracted, neglected to ask themselves frankly and realistically what price were they prepared to pay for unity. Because the question was difficult, and perhaps still more because it was one which could only accentuate the simmering divisions within Sinn Féin, it was shirked. Only today is it beginning to receive the frank consideration it demands. What does nationalist opinion regard as a fair price to pay for the reunion of a divided island?

¹ Quoted in I. Colvin, *Life of Lord Carson*, Vol. II (London, Gollancz), p. 104.

The Treaty of 1921 implicitly confirmed, subject to possible modification by the Boundary Commission, the Partition of Ireland enacted in 1920. But almost as important as the geographical division without was the internal division within Sinn Féin. It is an illusion to suppose that the division was between those who thought Dominion status was the right solution, and those who thought it was wrong. It was, on the contrary, one between those who felt that a compromise settlement was preferable to a continuance of the guerrilla warfare, which had gone on since 1919, which had brought law and order into contempt and the economic life of the country to a standstill, and those who maintained that on the question of the Republic established in 1916 there could be and should be no compromise with Britain, whatever the cost. That meant in the circumstances of the time no settlement. The division was fundamental, reflecting profound differences in temperament and outlook, which any critical decision was bound to bring to the surface. About this the Sinn Féin leaders had few illusions. In signing the Treaty, Michael Collins remarked, 'I am signing my death-warrant.' But in the pressure of events awareness did not lead to exposition and mutual understanding of the conflicting view-points. The extreme republicans and Mr de Valera were apparently surprised, even incredulous, when the delegation returned with the Treaty signed. Then, quickly, opinion hardened, and the republican left felt that the settlement was so wrong in principle that it must be opposed regardless of the consequences to party or State. To them something so fundamental as to stand above and beyond the normal democratic process seemed to be at stake, and neither the ratification of the Treaty by a narrow margin in the Dail nor its implicit approval by a much larger majority in the country in the follow-

ing General Election altered their opinion. 'The nation,' said Mr de Valera, 'has no right to do wrong.' This was logical but dangerous doctrine. Whether Mr de Valera was justified in his violent opposition to the Treaty is still a living political issue in an Ireland which has not yet escaped from the corroding memories of the civil war that followed.

The division on the Treaty was a division on the greatest political issue with which a country can be confronted. On both sides were ranged men of principle and men of no principle, men of reason and men of faith. 'There are men of faith and men of reason. I am a man of reason' said Mr de Valera once, 'but when a man of faith like Rory O'Connor says he will carry on, I am only a humble soldier behind him'. That removed all possibility of negotiation, for Rory O'Connor was one of those stormy, heroic figures thrown up in dangerous days to whom the word 'compromise' is unknown. Terror and counter terror marked the lamentable course of the civil war, and the resultant deep division of Sinn Fein into its component *political* parts has never been bridged. The right wing, led by Mr Cosgrave, and numbering among its leaders Kevin O'Higgins, Patrick Hogan, Patrick McGilligan, and General Richard Mulcahy, who later succeeded Mr Cosgrave as leader of the party, were in office for the first ten years of the existence of the Irish Free State. It so happened, partly because of inner conviction, and partly because of the support of the larger farmers, business men and ex-Unionists for the Party of law and order, that the Government tended to pursue a conservative social policy. But it was its moderation nationally, its support for the Treaty settlement, that had brought the Party into existence. Likewise the republican dissidents of 1921 were extreme nationalists; they were not necessarily

to the left socially. Indeed it was probably the social conservatism of Mr de Valera's party in recent years which was responsible for the decline in the party's vote in 1948 and for its consequent fall. Even the Labour Party, not hitherto a major political force, has never wholly shaken itself free of this predominance of national issues, and in consequence has failed to subordinate all else to its social programme. It is significant that in the early days of the Free State the Labour Party, while opposed generally to the social policy of Mr Cosgrave's Government, supported its stand on the Treaty settlement and regarded the latter as the vital issue in the making and unmaking of Governments.

The third decisive event in recent Irish history was the accession of Mr de Valera and the Fianna Fail Party to power early in 1932. They remained in power for sixteen years. The programme under which Mr de Valera was elected was a national programme; national in both a political and an economic sense. His first action on assuming office was to denounce one by one the clauses in the Treaty which implied Irish membership of the Commonwealth, and allegiance to the Crown. His second was to put into effect an economic programme whose principal aim was national self-sufficiency. The 'economic war', brought about by Mr de Valera's decision not to pay the interest on the Land Annuities, was used as a means for building up a self-sufficient economy in the Irish Free State. Leaving aside the merits of the Annuities dispute, it is probable that Mr de Valera welcomed it because it enabled him to bring about an economic revolution involving great hardship at a pace that would otherwise not have been possible. The dispute, which involved the larger, more conservative, and on the whole more pro-British farmers who were dependent on cattle grazing

in heavy financial losses, opened the way for positive Government encouragement for tillage. The economic dispute also enabled the Government to put in hand its plans for decentralized industrial development on a considerable scale. A balanced economy as well as a self-sufficient economy was its aim, for it was determined to avoid the great concentrations of industry which had brought at once great wealth for the few and much hardship for the many in Western Europe.

The attempt to build up a balanced economy was undertaken partly on its own merits and partly to end Ireland's exclusive dependence on trade, particularly her cattle trade, with Britain. Mr de Valera stated in so many words that he felt that Ireland should no longer be a 'kitchen garden' for supplying cheap food to Britain. But since exports were essential to pay for Eire's imports of raw materials and manufactured goods, an outlet for her agricultural surplus had to be sought, if not in Britain, then elsewhere. Between 1932 and 1938, great efforts were made to develop trade with European countries, with France, with Germany and with Spain. Results were achieved, but they were on a modest scale. Of that, the trade statistics provide conclusive evidence. In 1929, under Mr Cosgrave's Government, with its faith in a *laissez-faire* economy and maximum trade with Britain, 6 per cent of Eire's exports went to foreign countries. By 1937, after four years of consistent attempts at diversion elsewhere, the percentage had been raised only to 8 per cent. In other words, despite a deliberate policy sustained by bounties and subsidy payments, 92 per cent of Eire's export trade still went to British Empire countries, and more than 90 per cent to the United Kingdom. The lesson to be learnt from this, unwelcome in many respects, was clear enough.

In other directions Mr de Valera's attempts to broaden

the basis of Eire's economy achieved notable results. The most important was perhaps psychological. The revival of agriculture, the expansion in tillage, introduced, for a time at least, a new and more positive spirit into the life of the countryside. There was a much increased demand for agricultural labour and in due course for agricultural machinery. All this was certainly to the good. So too, though they were destined to meet with varying fortunes, were the number of comparatively small industries established in the country towns. Mr de Valera maintained that by reviving large-scale growing of wheat and other cereals, and expanding the acreage under sugar beet, he restored a healthy balance to Eire's agricultural economy. During the war years the policy was in many respects substantially vindicated. At a critical time Eire found herself virtually self-supporting in sugar, and, provided that there was a reasonably good harvest and a sufficiency of imported fertilizers, nearly self-supporting in wheat. Whether a readjustment, wise in itself, has been pushed too far is a matter on which Mr de Valera's opponents entertain strong views. Their criticism of the scale of compulsory tillage, particularly in the rich pasture lands of Tipperary and Limerick, seems well founded. But in general the measure of Mr de Valera's success in securing a more balanced economy stands out in contrast to the failure of his attempts to secure a substantial redirection of Eire's export trade. This last is not only an economic factor of the first importance; it is also a political factor of high significance.

On the political side, the conceptions of Mr de Valera's Party were embodied in the new Constitution enacted in 1937. The Constitution, which was ratified by universal suffrage, reflected Mr de Valera's political convictions, and those of the dissident Republicans who rejected the

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Treaty of 1921. Mr de Valera played a large part in its drafting, and in recommending its adoption to the electorate. The Constitution is more than the framework of a Government; it aspires to embody as well a political philosophy—the political philosophy of Fianna Fail, and, above all, of Mr de Valera. The declaration of the rights and obligations of Irish citizens; the clauses of a non-justiciable character defining the aims of social policy, the special position of the Roman Catholic Church, and the status of the family, are essays in the difficult task of translating social and political concepts into constitutional form. It is that attempt which has made the Constitution a model to be studied and, in part, copied by the new national States of the Far East.¹ The attempt may not have been wholly successful, but Irish nationalists like other nationalists before them, and nationalists in India and Burma after them, felt that the attempt should be made.

¹ The Union of India is described in the Constitution of 1948 as 'sovereign, democratic state' where in 1937 Ireland was described as 'a sovereign, independent, democratic state'. Most striking are the parallels between the Irish constitution and that of Burma. For example Article 44, para. 1, of the Irish Constitution reads:

'The State recognizes the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens.'

'The State also recognizes the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, as well as the Jewish congregations and the other religious denominations existing in Ireland at the date of the coming into operation of this Constitution.'

'The State guarantees not to endow any religion and shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status.'

Article 21 of the Burmese Constitution declares:

1. The State recognizes the special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens of the Union.

2. The State also recognizes Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Animism as some of the religions existing in the Union at the date of the coming into operation of this Constitution.

3. The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious faith or belief.'

What could be more fitting than that the philosophy of the revolution, which brought a new State into being, should be embalmed in its constitution?

The form of government follows the accepted Western democratic pattern with a bi-cameral legislature and an independent judiciary. But there are also in it elements deriving from both the French Cabinet and the American Presidential system. In principle they are not easily reconciled. Discounting the unhappy experiences of continental countries, who in the past have tried experiments on similar lines, the Constitution provides that the President of Eire be elected by universal suffrage, but that executive power should lie with a cabinet responsible to the Dail. While the discretionary authority of the President is limited, it is wider than that either of the King in the United Kingdom, or of the Governors-General in the Dominions, or of the French President under the Constitution of the Third Republic. It needs no Walt Whitman denouncing the 'endless audacity of elected persons' to remind us of the dangers involved. They are accentuated by the fact that in certain circumstances the President is placed in a position in which he could appeal to the people over the heads of the elected representatives of the people. And such an appeal direct or even indirect could not be ignored. The President is the elected representative of all the people. *An Taoiseach* is elected by the Dail and to that extent it might be claimed that his authority is at one remove from the people. Implicit, therefore, in the Irish Constitution is the possibility of conflict between the two arms of the executive, because on a cabinet system of government is superimposed a President, whose source of authority is at once distinct and more considerable than the exercise of his powers demands. Hitherto these fears have acquired no substance from events. But the test will

come—and one day it is bound to come—when a strong man fills the office of President; when perhaps the party to which he belonged is defeated in a general election, and at some critical moment he is confronted by a Government trying to carry through a policy to which he is profoundly opposed. Will he not be tempted, unfairly tempted, to abuse his popular authority? It was significant that in the Union of India it was decided after careful consideration not to incur such risks.

As the tension heightened in Europe it became more and more evident that in the event of war Eire would remain neutral. On 12 December 1938, Mr de Valera stated:

We have definitely committed ourselves to the proposition that this island shall not be used as a base for enemy attacks upon Great Britain. It is possible to visualize a critical situation arising in the future in which a united, free Ireland would be willing to co-operate with Britain to resist a common attack. Let me say clearly that the chances of such co-operation in the event of a European war are very, very slight while Partition remains. If such a war occurred while British forces were in occupation of any part of Ireland, Irish sentiment would definitely be hostile to any co-operation.¹

And in a speech at Ennis on 16 April 1939, Mr de Valera said:

The desire of the Irish people, and the desire of the Irish Government is to keep our nation out of war. The aim of Government policy is to maintain and preserve our neutrality.

This view was not challenged by any party. The presumption that Eire would remain neutral adds greatly to the significance of the agreement reached with the United

¹ Statement to the *Evening Standard's* representative.

Kingdom in 1938, soon after Hitler had marched into Austria. Under this agreement the British Government, as part of a general settlement of outstanding economic and political differences, handed over the naval ports which had been retained by the Treaty of 1921 as bases for naval operations in war-time. This step, taken by Mr Neville Chamberlain, was applauded in Ireland where it certainly helped to kindle friendlier feelings, and it is just to record that in that country he still enjoys a high reputation for fair-mindedness and statesmanship. Mr Chamberlain's decision, publicly regretted by Mr Churchill during the most difficult days of the war, when the lack of naval facilities on Eire's Atlantic coast much increased the burden of maintaining the lifeline to the United States, was taken, so Lord Chatfield later recorded in *The Times*, with the full assent of his strategic advisers who considered that the ports, isolated from sources of supply and with a possibly unfriendly hinterland, were a liability rather than an asset.

Eire's neutrality inevitably created a delicate situation within the British Isles. After France had fallen in 1940 there was always a possibility of a German landing in Eire with a view to an attack on Britain from the west. This danger to Britain was recognized in Dublin and Mr de Valera renewed his assurances that he would never allow Eire to be used by any hostile forces as a base to attack Britain. 'Friendly neutrality'—the words are Mr de Valera's—is a fair statement of the country's attitude. The vast majority of Irish people felt that no other course was possible and Mr de Valera's policy was accepted by all parties and endorsed, unchallenged in principle, at the general elections of 1943 and 1944. Neutrality was throughout a problem of external relationships, not of internal politics.

All these things, the Easter Rebellion, the Treaty, the economic war, neutrality, are at the very heart of Irish politics to-day. They can neither be overlooked nor neglected. They have become part of the national tradition and a nation does not go back on its tradition, though it may reinterpret it, or lay emphasis on different aspects of it at different times. It was the complaint of Mr MacBride, the leader of a new Republican party at the 1948 general election, that pre-occupation with this recent past was so great as to exclude proper consideration by electorate and Dail of the problems of the post-war world. Certainly it is true that pre-occupation with political issues has overshadowed consideration of social and economic problems. The bland assumption of critics that this indicates a lack of realism on the part of the Irish electorate should not, however, pass unquestioned. Is it not the case that political problems in Ireland have been fundamental over the last twenty-five years? Is it not the case that until they were settled, concentration on economic and social issues would have been unreal? Even among many of those who certainly would not wish to be numbered among his disciples, Marx's belief in the universal validity of the economic interpretation has been tacitly accepted. To Aristotle, man was a political animal, but contemporary critics affect to believe that an electorate, primarily concerned with political problems, is for that very reason to be dismissed as immature.

But having said so much in order to try to set the Irish scene in perspective, it is to be added that the pre-occupation with political issues has been unduly prolonged into a period when opportunity and circumstance combine to make a concentration on economic and social issues at once possible and desirable. With the exception of Partition the major political problems are for the moment,

at least, settled. It is true that the electorate in February 1948 gave a cool welcome to Mr MacBride's new party, but it is to its credit that by focusing attention on the low standard of social services, on the evils of emigration, and on the imperative need of relating economic policy to social objectives, it introduced a new element of urgency into the discussion of these questions. Making every allowance for notable advances in recent years and for marked differences in resources and in wealth and purchasing power, the margin between the standard of social services in the United Kingdom and in Eire remained hard to justify. In Eire, in 1947, to take one example, old age pensions became payable at the age of 70 at the rate of 14s. 6d. per week¹; in the United Kingdom at the age of 65 at the rate of 26s. per week. Since Northern Ireland social services are on the same level as those in Britain, this wide discrepancy has a direct relevance to the problem of Partition. Of that Mr MacBride at least has shown himself fully aware.

In Eire the dominant force is nationalism. The *Clann na Poblachta* which irrupted into the political scene in the by-elections of October 1947 is, for all its concentration on social problems, fundamentally a party of the republican-national left. The Labour Party, for many years divided on the issue of affiliation to the Trades Union Congress, remains an important but subordinate force. It is a curious fact that in the 1948 election, fought largely on social and economic issues against a background of rising prices weighing heavily on the poorer sections of the community in the urban areas, Labour, all told, secured only three seats in the Dublin constituencies, returning thirty Deputies. True the position of the Labour Parties was improved by winning sixteen seats in the remainder of the

¹ The rate was increased in 1948.

country, but on a long-term view that may not be very encouraging. For in rural constituencies there has always been, and is likely for some time to remain, a ceiling to Labour's progress. Ireland is a predominantly agricultural country. It depends on the land. And the land is now owned by small farmers. Nearly 45 per cent of the farms are under fifteen acres in extent. The great bulk, some 93 per cent, are under a hundred. Small farmers are conservative by temperament. They are also nationalist. Their conservatism and their nationalism alike make them allergic to the appeal of progressive Labour.

The long established parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, have little sectional or class appeal. It is true that Fine Gael, the pro-Treaty party standing to the right of Mr de Valera on the national issue, still numbers among its supporters the larger farmers, long-established industrialists and ex-Unionists. It is true also that their mistrust of State planning, their faith in a *laissez-faire* agricultural economy, which would place greater emphasis on livestock farming, greater dependence on cattle exports to Britain as in the days before compulsory tillage, places them implicitly to the right also on social issues. But if their appeal is mainly to the conservative, propertied classes, the party has never had a class background, and any such narrowing of its foundation would destroy its prospects of a return to office. Since Mr Cosgrave's fall the party suffered a long decline which was not halted till the 1948 election. But a return to office with a dominant position in an inter-party government in which Labour is fully represented may well have a reinvigorating effect, and is incidentally instructive evidence of its non-sectional approach.

The consistent strength of Mr de Valera's party, Fianna Fail, since 1932 has afforded proof of the support it

derives from all classes. It remains in opposition far the largest Party in the Dail. In the 1948 election Fianna Fail was concerned to convince the electorate that, while it might promise less, it could do more for the workers than any of its rivals. The party, observed Mr Lemass, then Deputy Prime Minister, is a workers' party, but not a class party, because it does not believe in fundamental class antagonisms. According to an instructive occupational analysis published in *The Irish Press* during the election campaign 45 of the party's 119 candidates were working farmers; 18 were workers; 11 teachers; and 45 professional and business men. It is often supposed that this non-class party alignment is something that will disappear as the political divisions, inherited from the Treaty issue, become blurred. It may be so. Much will depend on economic developments in coming years, but the predominantly agricultural foundation of Irish social life makes such a readjustment by no means probable.

Social and economic issues may still be subordinate, but a study of the election speeches and literature in the 1948 campaign shows that they are acquiring an ever-increasing importance in the eyes of the electorate. This factor served to weaken the appeal of Fianna Fail after the end of the war. After all, by 1948, the national revolution had been completed so far as the twenty-six counties were concerned. That had been the outstanding achievement of Mr de Valera. The programme on which he had come to power in 1932 had been a national programme. The Constitution of 1937, republican in fact if not in name, had marked, with one exception, the attainment of Mr de Valera's main objectives. It was Partition that remained. But as the years went by, the problem seemed no nearer solution and Mr de Valera in office could do little more than reaffirm his faith that somehow, some day the Boundary would go.

'I am certain Partition must be ended, will be ended . . . ' he declared at the twenty-first anniversary of the Fianna Fail Party in 1947. But faith is one thing, a programme of action is another. And in the early, exuberant days of Fianna Fail it was a programme of action that carried the Party from one electoral triumph to another. That acid correspondence about the Oath with the not so agile Mr J. H. Thomas at the Dominions Office, that political challenge thrown down in 1932 and quickly extended, by the withholding of the Land Annuities, into the 'economic war'; the advance step by step towards the republican goal; those were themes by which the heart of the electorate was won. The war and Eire's neutrality, on which there was no difference of opinion among the Parties and which was regarded as the final vindication of Eire's sovereign independence, probably prolonged Mr de Valera's unchallenged period of power. His international experience at the League of Nations; his immense prestige at home; his steadying influence; all made him the inevitable leader of a country undergoing the most exacting experience of its early nationhood. But might it not be that his approach to the political problem that survived, to Partition, was psychologically and practically ill-judged?

Fianna Fail could afford, no more than Fine Gael, to rest on the laurels of the past, and in 1948 after sixteen years both the Party and Government showed signs of staleness. There had been an infusion of new blood in high office, but not enough. In the meantime promotion had been blocked, and the young men on the look out for political opportunities did not look as once they did to Fianna Fail. A greater liability than staleness had been the tarnishing effect of long years in office. The lustre of national achievement had become dimmed in a day-to-

day concern with a rapidly rising cost of living; the reputation of the past had been 'smeared' by bitterly resented charges of corruption; vitality weighed down by the burden of responsibility. A party so long in office was an easy target for attack—almost everything could be laid at its door—and pretty well everything was! Its task now is to regain the initiative, particularly on the social front. Only by creating a new sense of urgency and of mission can the party avoid the fate which overtook Fine Gael in the last fifteen years.

In Ireland, personality remains more important than policy. For the last three decades Mr de Valera has been the most significant personality in Irish politics, and, long though he has dominated the scene, he remains the outstanding figure in it. In 1948 most electors voted pro-Dev or anti-Dev. Austere, but not so aloof as is often supposed, a democrat by conviction but something of an autocrat by temperament, Mr de Valera combines intellectual ability with a shrewd political judgement. An Oxford tutor after meeting him for the first time said of their conversation, 'It was like one don talking to another.' This observation would probably be accepted by Mr de Valera, but not by many politicians, as a compliment. And yet if he is something of the professor among politicians, he is more than a little of a politician among professors. He is a man of inflexible will—ready to compromise when he has got what he wants. There was something very characteristic about the way in which he let it be known that he considered Eire to be a republic.¹

Mr Dillon: Are we a republic or are we not, for nobody seems to know?

The Taoiseach: We are, if that is all the Deputy wants to know.

¹ *Dail Debates*, Vol. 97, No. 8, col. 2115 seq. 11 July 1945.

Mr Dillon: This is a republic? This is the greatest news I have heard for a long time. Now we know where we are. . . . When did it happen, can any one tell us?

The Taoiseach: You will hear all about it later.

A week later Mr de Valera explained: 'The State is what it is, not what I say or think it is. How a particular State is to be classified politically is a matter not to be settled by the *ipse dixit* of any person, but by observation of the State's institutions, and an examination of its fundamental laws.' To assist Deputies in their identification of the form of the State, Mr de Valera then recited the definition of a 'republic' contained in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, *Webster's International Dictionary*, the *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, and *Chambers's Dictionary*.¹ It was from this episode that Opposition Deputies derived their taunt about Mr de Valera's 'dictionary republic', which they publicized in season and out while Mr de Valera remained in office. Whether they were wise in so doing is open to question because, in fact, it is clear that Mr de Valera was all too studiously trying to pursue the path of moderation. A more emphatic declaration of a republic might well have been interpreted as a severance of relations with the Commonwealth, whereas this oblique admission that a republic had in fact existed since 1937, coupled with the reminder that since that date the United Kingdom and the oversea Dominions continued to regard Eire as a member of the Commonwealth, avoided the raising of otherwise awkward issues.

The Republic and the unity of Ireland go ill together. In 1921, the six north-eastern counties of Ireland, comprising Northern Ireland, opted to stay outside the Irish Free State. The population of Northern Ireland, with

¹ Dail Debates, Vol. 97, No. 9, col. 2568 seq.

Belfast its great industrial centre, is about $1\frac{1}{4}$ million, of which about two-thirds are Unionists by a conviction hardened by recent experiences. They believe that Northern Ireland should remain part and parcel of the United Kingdom. Their objection to Dominion status is that it would separate them too much from Britain. By them the concept of an Irish Republic is viewed with the most profound distaste.

In Northern Ireland political and religious divisions coincide very closely. About 66 per cent of the population is Protestant, and just because religious and political divisions coincide it seems unlikely that there will be any radical change in the attitude of Northern Ireland to Partition in the foreseeable future. At the same time Northern Ireland suffers from one fundamental weakness. One-third of the population has never been reconciled to government from Belfast. It is often suggested, with this in mind, that the relations between Eire and Northern Ireland could be put on a much more satisfactory basis by a redrafting of the Boundary line coupled with a comparatively small movement of population. At first sight this seems a reasonable enough suggestion, but in actual fact it is not a proposal that on reflection would commend itself either in Belfast or in Dublin. The redrafting of the Boundary, if it could be done so as to exclude the bulk of the nationalist minority from Northern Ireland, would in fact reduce the area to a size so small as not to leave it a viable unit politically, and still less economically. On the other hand, whatever Mr de Valera may have said recently, he would scarcely be satisfied by any such modification.

Mr Costello believes, as Mr de Valera believed, that Ireland is a unity, and the objection is to Partition in principle just as much as to Partition in practice. If the

Boundary were redrawn with strict regard to political opinions it would assume an air of finality which nationalists could only deplore. Moreover, minorities and their grievances are very useful things to have in any political armoury, though it may not be the course of prudence to exploit them unduly in foreign countries.

There seems little prospect of the ending of Partition in any immediate future. When the older generation has gone it may be possible to reach some compromise solution. But, if so, the formidable nature of the difficulties must first be faced frankly. In Eire, Dominion status is viewed with doubt because it implies too close an association with Britain; in Northern Ireland, it is rejected because it implies too great a degree of detachment from Britain. That difference is the outward sign of a deep gulf in political outlook. How is it to be bridged? What concessions are to be made? On the more practical side there are now the very real differences in the standard of social services. So long as social services in Northern Ireland remain on the same level as those in the United Kingdom, they are bound to be higher than the corresponding rates in Eire. Will this not profoundly influence the attitude of Labour in Northern Ireland? It is indeed a curious fact that the right-wing Unionist Government in Northern Ireland, through the identification of its social policy with that in Britain, is the pioneer of social security in Ireland. And what regional defence arrangements would Eire be prepared to contemplate pending the organization of an effective instrument of international security?

Those are questions easy to ask, not so easy to answer. Some will be answered by events. Cumulatively their importance is great. But it would be quite wrong to suppose that these obstacles to reunion have the same enduring

character as the forces working for its achievement. That Ireland will remain indefinitely partitioned in inconceivable. But, if a spirit of sensible compromise prevails, reunion will come not dramatically, but quietly, as the result of practical co-operation in many fields.

The dramatic element in Irish history has been the triumph of nationalism, but at least as remarkable has been the steady growth of representative government. That is something which, in the long run, may prove a powerful uniting force between north and south. Respect for the principles and practices of democracy has not passed unchallenged in Ireland in the last quarter of a century, but the result has been to drive its roots deeper. Discussion, that great essential of democracy, is clearly the only means by which co-operation on a friendlier basis between north and south can be achieved; and the time has surely come when the problems it presents might be discussed in an atmosphere of less asperity than hitherto.

For different reasons, representative government has meant government remarkable for its stability both in Northern Ireland and in Eire. The Unionist Government in Northern Ireland has been in office since 1920, and so long as Partition remains the predominant issue, change can be brought about only by a 'palace revolution', such as that which substituted Sir Basil Brooke for Mr J. M. Andrews. In the twenty-six counties Mr Cosgrave's ten years of office were succeeded by Mr de Valera's sixteen. This record of stability is all the more noteworthy because there have been no less than eleven general elections under the principles of proportional representation since 1921. To this long period of stable government, the steady progress that has been made both in north and south in building up a sound economy and administration since the 'troubles' is in no small measure to be attributed.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FORCES IN IRELAND

For Ireland as a whole Western Union is a concept which has far reaching implications. As the nations of Western Europe who profess allegiance to the principles of liberty and democracy have been driven into closer co-operation than any would otherwise have been prepared to contemplate, in order to be able to withstand a menace from without threatening all alike, so too it may be that in Ireland a common reaction to this same menace will lead through economic to political co-operation between north and south. When at last the history of the twentieth century comes to be written, may it not be recorded there that one of the most beneficent and enduring consequences of Soviet policy in Europe was that it re-united Ireland and finally reconciled Britain and Ireland?

VIII

THE IMPLICATIONS OF EIRE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

IT is not my intention here to review the course of Anglo-Irish relations but to examine in some detail the implications of the political and constitutional relationship between Eire on the one hand and the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth of Nations on the other. That these implications have been of far-reaching importance for Eire itself and for the development of the Commonwealth as a whole is evident and certain, but over and above that they possess at this time a particular and immediate relevance in a wider field. In Asia to-day, and in many parts of Africa to-morrow, the British Commonwealth will be confronted with nationally self-conscious peoples balancing in their minds the relative advantages of equal partnership within the Commonwealth and independent existence outside it. Many factors will determine their choice and among them the psychological factor will be by no means least. However different in form, the problem that now confronts British statesmanship in the East is the same in essentials as that which confronted it in Ireland a quarter of a century ago. The problem, broadly stated, is that of associating a people with a cultural tradition of its own and an intensely national outlook with a group of States whose existence depends upon the reconciliation of individual interests with those of the community as a whole. In 1921 the prob-

lem was solved by the grant of Dominion status to the Irish Free State. Was this the right solution? Can Dominions be made artificially as well as grow naturally? Has the wisdom of the solution been justified in the sequel? Did it display the right psychological approach? These are questions that seem to deserve critical examination. Like India, Ireland is a mother country with a cultural tradition that may be traced back to the earliest centuries of the Christian era, and for that reason, if for no other, recent experience of Anglo-Irish relations is likely to provide a source from which many lessons may be learnt. Of that, those who determine the destinies of India, of Pakistan, of Burma, and of the other countries in South East Asia are well aware. The possibility of finding a solution to the Dutch-Indonesian problem in some form of 'external association' on the Irish model was examined in 1947 and it was also considered, perhaps too casually, as a possible foundation for our future relations with Burma. In both instances, political tensions made progress difficult. But the lasting impression left from these somewhat desultory discussions is that there is a real need for some considered assessment of the concept of 'external association'; of its history in the general context of Anglo-Irish relations, and of the lessons to be drawn from it for application in other fields.

It was on 30 July 1921 that Mr Lloyd George invited Mr de Valera to come to a peace conference in order to 'ascertain how the association of Ireland with the community of nations known as the British Empire can best be reconciled with Irish nationalist aspirations'. That, concisely stated, was the problem on which the prolonged, tense Treaty negotiations turned. To Mr Lloyd George's question there were in fact two answers given. The first was that given by the Irish delegation, briefed as they had

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been before leaving for London by the Dail, the Cabinet, and its President, Mr de Valera. It was external association. Opposed to it was the British answer, Dominion status.

The phrase 'external association' was interpreted by the Irish delegates as meaning absolute sovereignty in all internal affairs for an Ireland associated with the British Commonwealth for purposes of common external concern. The significant points in the draft treaty which the Irish delegation took with them to London were: (i) that Ireland be recognized as a sovereign independent State; (ii) that Britain renounce all claim to govern or legislate for Ireland; (iii) that Ireland agree to become an external associate of the Commonwealth on the understanding that in this capacity her status should not be less than that of the 'sovereign partner States of the Commonwealth'. It followed logically from this concept of external association that, while Irish citizens and citizens of the British Commonwealth might and should enjoy reciprocal rights, the idea of a common citizenship had to be discarded. In broader terms, under the original tentative pre-treaty drafts for external association and in the variant put forward by Mr de Valera and the dissident republicans in Document Number 2 after the Treaty had been signed, Ireland would have been a republic not within the Empire but associated with it. Throughout—and this is important—the emphasis was placed upon Ireland's internal sovereignty, upon which no restriction formal or informal was to be tolerated, to so great an extent that the Irish delegation to the conference were instructed, if compromise they must, to compromise on external affairs. After the issue had been decided Document Number 2, which constituted Mr de Valera's considered alternative to the treaty settlement, explicitly recorded that the matters of

common concern should include defence, peace and war, and all matters considered as being of common concern among the members of the British Commonwealth. Throughout, one is left with the impression that agreement in the field of external affairs presented comparatively little difficulty in 1921 provided no concessions of substance or form were asked for in the internal field.¹

It was precisely on the question of the symbols of sovereignty in Ireland that the United Kingdom delegation were least prepared to compromise. Mindful of the problem of Northern Ireland and for more general reasons of policy and sentiment, they were insistent that the bond of unity represented by a common loyalty to the Crown should be recognized and that, in conformity with existing practice in the Dominions, the King be the head of the State, acting through a Governor-General appointed by him, and that an oath of allegiance to the King, in recognition of his position, be taken by the members of the Irish Parliament. Here the doctrinaire republicans remained adamant; it was an issue on which they were prepared to make no concession. To them, as indeed to the United Kingdom delegates, the form and symbols of the State were fundamental. The Irish delegation, led by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, influenced more by practical considerations than theoretical conceptions, decided on the other hand that Dominion status offered a reasonable compromise solution and signed the Treaty. Civil war in Ireland was the sequel.

The Treaty which was signed in December 1921 gave Dominion status to the Irish Free State which comprised twenty-six of the thirty-two counties of Ireland. The new

¹ Cf. Frank Pakenham, *op. cit.* Chapter IV, where a full and authoritative account of the Irish proposals is given. See also Miss D. Macardle, *op. cit.* pp. 600-12, 653-64.

State was to have the same constitutional status in the British Commonwealth as 'the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa'; more particularly the status of the Irish Free State was defined as being that of the Dominion of Canada, and 'the law, practice and constitutional usage governing the relationship of the Crown and of the Imperial Parliament to the Dominion of Canada shall govern their relationship to the Irish Free State.' This intimate association of the Irish Free State with the other Dominions was intended to ensure that Ireland should evolve in status step by step with the over-sea Dominions; that she should feel her position guaranteed by the mere fact that it rested on the same constitutional foundation as theirs; and finally in this way the danger of defining Dominion status, of which Lloyd George was so rightly conscious, was wholly avoided. Dominion status was therefore conferred on a country which had not evolved towards it but reached it in one revolutionary step. 'In 1921', Mr Latham wrote, 'the quiet waters of the conventional Commonwealth' were disturbed 'by the immersion of a foreign body.'¹ What have been the consequences?

Between the British view of the Treaty and the Irish there has always been a gulf. The signature of the Treaty was regarded by Mr Churchill, in words which acquired a fuller meaning in 1940, 'as one of the most questionable and hazardous experiments upon which a great empire in the plenitude of its power has ever embarked'. If one may judge by the comments of the press on 7 December 1921 the popular welcome for the Treaty was cordial, all the more cordial because there was in it a sense of relief coupled with a satisfying sense of achievement. The *Daily*

¹ *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, Vol. 1, p. 513.

Telegraph on 7 December 1921 summed it up in saying 'this event is the greatest that has happened in the internal affairs of the country for generations.' The critics were in the right, the *Morning Post* denouncing the Treaty as 'the most disastrous blunder ever committed by a British Government', and their intransigence explains many of the manoeuvres to which Mr Lloyd George felt bound to resort during the negotiations. Not to be overlooked either was the great body of opinion which regarded the whole affair as a tiresome intrusion in the brave, new, post-war world. They found their voice in the *Daily Express* which commented: 'Now for business! The settlement of the Irish question throws wide open the door for the entry of the Boom in Trade.'

The Irish reaction is most faithfully reflected in the Dail debate on the Treaty. There the settlement was endorsed only by a narrow margin of seven votes, and even those who supported the Treaty took as their text Parnell's saying that 'no man can set a boundary to the march of a nation.' In other words, the pro-Treaty party defended the Treaty as one step forward on the road to independence, while their opponents denounced it as a step sideways leading them on to a road along which they had neither the wish nor the right to travel. And to their denunciation was added the condemnation of the dead—of the martyrs of 1916. Nothing throws into clearer relief the width of the gulf that separated English and Irish opinion at that time than the fact that Document Number 2 was put forward by Mr de Valera as a compromise solution embodying every concession which republican opinion was prepared to make. The reaction to it in Britain is well known, but less well known is the fact that to this day doctrinaire republicans in Ireland taunt Mr de Valera with having gone too far and abandoned his

principles in a vain search for compromise. No one on the Irish side, except perhaps Mr Arthur Griffith, regarded the Treaty as an ideal settlement, though the majority believed it was to be preferred to any practicable alternative. In such circumstances its prospects of survival were clearly slight.

Looking back over the years one reflection can scarcely be avoided. Dominion status, despite its flexibility, was not the most obvious answer to Mr Lloyd George's question. What place was there for an inflamed self-assertive Irish nationalism in full and equal partnership with a British Commonwealth composed of States peopled for the most part by immigrants from the British Isles? Ireland herself was a mother country and for that reason, if for no other, felt she had little in common either psychologically or culturally with the oversea Dominions. The very flexibility of Dominion status, which was the pride of the statesmen of the Commonwealth, evoked only misgiving in Irish minds. They craved, whether wisely or not is beside the point, for precise, logical definitions. They thought not in terms of evolution but of revolution. While the majority were probably not convinced republicans, they certainly felt no natural, spontaneous loyalty to the Crown. Later Mr de Valera referred to the King as 'an alien king', and in 1948, Mr Costello declared that because of past associations the Crown 'was anathema in Ireland'. The Balfour Declaration of 1926, by its emphasis on the Crown as the symbol of the unity of the Commonwealth, enhanced its importance as a factor in determining the attitude of Ireland to the Commonwealth.

The Treaty was a great step forward for the Irish Free State. There Griffith was right. Even Mr de Valera admitted, some ten years later, that progress under it had been rapid and substantial. But it must also be recognized

that it was a step forward along a road different from that along which the Irish nationalists had hoped to travel. The result of this incompatibility between status and ideology has in fact meant on the one hand that Ireland has never psychologically regarded herself as a Dominion, and on the other hand it has introduced into the circle of the Dominions a State which shares the ideals and the outlook of the oversea partners but remains unreconciled to the particular constitutional system which they have evolved. The sequel has been very much as might be expected. In the great period of the Commonwealth evolution between 1926 and 1931 Ireland played her full part. At the Imperial Conferences of 1926 and 1930 her representatives were in the forefront of every move to secure equality not only of status, but also of function. She strengthened greatly the fissiparous tendencies within the Commonwealth. Though it is probable that the impact of the Irish Free State on the Commonwealth served for the most part to hasten a development which Canadian and South African opinion would in any event have demanded, this is a subject which deserves far more detailed study than it has so far received. One result of forcing the Irish Free State into the same pattern as the oversea Dominions was to change the pattern. So long as it was a case of 'pulling asunder the old Colonial Empire', to use Mr McGilligan's phrase, there was a community of purpose with the oversea Dominions, but when that task was completed it was inevitable that their evolution and that of the Free State should tend to diverge.

The divergence became apparent as soon as Mr de Valera assumed office in 1932. For the next six years in the constitutional field the symbols of Commonwealth unity were one by one removed. The first to go was the oath—that oath, which Lord Birkenhead is reputed to have

described as 'the greatest prevarication in history', because there were embodied in it so many nice inflexions of meaning in a vain attempt to reconcile all parties to its adoption. It was denounced by Mr de Valera as 'an intolerable burden', 'a relic of medievalism imposed from outside under the threat of immediate and terrible war'. There followed the appeal to the Privy Council, the functions and then the office of Governor-General. In defence of this unilateral abrogation of the Treaty, Mr de Valera maintained that Commonwealth symbolism had been imposed under duress. That there was incompatibility between Mr Lloyd George's pressure, to use no stronger word, to secure the acceptance of Dominion status in 1921 and the Balfour Declaration of five years later with its description of the members of the Commonwealth as autonomous communities 'freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth' is hardly to be denied. But whatever the merits of the dispute, by 1937 the wheel had come almost in full circle; Mr de Valera drafted a new constitution, had it accepted by a plebiscite, and with the sanction of popular approval established a system of government in Ireland conforming in all essentials to the external association which had been rejected in 1921. Under this Constitution the Governor-General was replaced by an elected President; the oath of allegiance by an oath of loyalty to the State; its enactment was preceded by legislation which repudiated common citizenship and replaced it by the concept of reciprocal citizenship. Only one thing, however, the Constitution did not do. It did not declare that the State was a republic.

Why was Ireland (Eire) declared in the constitution of 1937 to be 'a sovereign, independent, democratic State' without an explicit affirmation that it was a republic? The answer is three-fold. Britain might have retaliated in

the economic field at a time when Irish trade was still suffering from the economic war; more important, sentiment in Northern Ireland would have been further alienated, with the result that the already slender prospects of bringing about the reunion of Ireland would have disappeared for generations; and finally, Mr de Valera's own predilections which were not made known till 1946. For nine years the State remained without a name but in that year this regrettable lacuna was remedied when Mr de Valera rather casually, in answer to a question in the Dail, stated that she was in fact a republic, and had been one since the constitution of 1937 was enacted.¹ To the question why no formal designation had then been made, Mr de Valera, replied that while this State is 'a sovereign, independent republic unfortunately it did not cover the whole of Ireland and for that reason I did not introduce into the Constitution the name of Poblacht na h'Eireann because that was a name which was sacred'.

What was the attitude of the republic to the Commonwealth and to the symbol of its unity, the Crown? In September 1947 Mr de Valera for his part defined the position. 'As a matter of our external policy,' he said,

we are associated with the States of the British Commonwealth of Nations. We are not members of it.

We are associates of the States of the Commonwealth; but if they regard the existence of the King as a necessary link, if they consider that it is the bond they have, then we have not got that bond . . . We are externally associated with the States of the British Commonwealth.

This view has been accepted without substantial modification by the inter-party Government which came to power the following year. Mr MacBride, the Minister for External Affairs stated categorically in August 1948 that

¹ See p. 188.

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Eire was not a member of the Commonwealth. The relationship was described by him and reaffirmed by *an Taoiseach*, Mr Costello, as being one of friendly association for purposes of common concern.

The Irish interpretation of her constitutional development has always conflicted with that of the United Kingdom Government and of the other Governments of the Commonwealth. In 1937 the United Kingdom Government with the assent of the Governments of the oversea Dominions stated that they regarded the new constitution 'as not effecting a fundamental alteration in the position of the Irish Free State'. This statement had unquestionable tactical merits. It averted a final severance; it left the next move to Mr de Valera, and he did not make it for nine years. To maintain a bridge between the two countries was no mean achievement, and it was one evidently welcomed by Mr de Valera, for when asked to record his views about the United Kingdom Government's statement he replied that he had no comment to make.

On a long-term view the wisdom of the policy of continuing to regard Eire as a Dominion seems much more questionable. The statement of 1937 in the form in which it was made carried certain implications, the more far-reaching because the opinion then expressed remained the official view of His Majesty's Government at least until 1948. In June 1947, the Government of Eire was consulted, with the oversea Dominions, about the alteration of the Royal Title consequent upon the change of status in India and Pakistan as 'a member of the Commonwealth'. It follows from it that Eire remained a Dominion within the Commonwealth even though her Constitution was that of a republic, though the Crown had no place either in her executive or legislative organs of government, and, most important, even though in the view of her own Govern-

ment she owed no allegiance to the Crown, and was not a full partner in the Commonwealth but a sovereign State outside it associated with it for certain purposes. The statement introduced superficially a new element of flexibility into the Commonwealth relations, but fundamentally did it not betray a disturbing rigidity of outlook? For if in fact Mr de Valera's sustained and unremitting efforts to uproot the Treaty settlement had effected no fundamental alteration in the position of the Irish Free State, then, after due allowance has been made for the changes in status embodied in the Statute of Westminster, the stand of the British negotiators against external association in 1921 was, at the least, short-sighted. Were not the United Kingdom Government papering over political inconsistency by verbal consistency? Were they not saying, in effect, we will continue to recognize Eire as a Dominion even though Eire herself does not consider she is a Dominion, and even though she does not pay allegiance to the Crown which was regarded by the Balfour Declaration as the symbol of the unity of the Commonwealth, because it is tactically a good thing to do and because the admission of the existence of a new form of relationship with the Commonwealth might have all sorts of embarrassing repercussions? While the policy of maintaining a bridge was sound the method adopted seems in retrospect unfortunate.

It is true that it can be, and has been, argued, for example by Professor K. C. Wheare, that Eire owes allegiance to the common Crown because the Constitution of 1937 provides that 'for the purpose of the exercise of any executive function of the State in or in connection with its external relations, the Government may . . . avail itself of or adopt any organ, instrument or method of procedure used or adopted for the like purpose by the

members of any group or league of nations with which the State is or becomes associated for the purpose of international co-operation in matters of common concern.'¹ This skilfully drafted permissive clause sanctions the procedure already adopted in the External Relations Act of 1936, which authorizes the use of the Crown in the form of the King's signature for the purpose of appointing diplomatic and consular representatives to be accredited to foreign countries. The practical difficulties in war-time were circumvented by the appointment of *chargés d'affaires*, and this use of the King's signature remains now as the one formal indication of the association between Eire and the Commonwealth. To say with Professor Wheare that it means that Eire owes allegiance to the common Crown seems unwarranted except in a nice legalistic sense, and his view is not accepted by the Eire Government. The link is one, as Mr de Valera has emphasized time and again, that remains so long as it is useful and convenient. 'The day,' he said in 1946, 'we find that inconvenient we can get rid of it very simply by arranging to have other methods in the accrediting of our representatives abroad.' That day is not far distant.²

It is more profitable in trying to form some final opinion of the advantages and disadvantages of external association to leave on one side theoretic considerations, and to examine its working in the field of foreign affairs both in peace and war.

In the field of political realities, it may appear that external association is a very negative concept. That was not always and need not always be the case. One reason

¹ *The Statute of Westminster and Dominion Status* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 272-3.

² Mr Norton, Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party, and Mr MacBride have advocated the repeal of the External Relations Act, and their view has now been endorsed by Mr Costello.

for it, so far as Ireland is concerned, may be that the imposition of Dominion status provoked a greater self-assertive desire for independent action in the foreign field than might otherwise have been the case. From 1921 to 1936 the place of the Crown in the Constitution was felt by the majority to be a symbol of subjection. Though it meant nothing of the kind in actual practice, the existence of the Crown in the Constitution carried, above all for the Fianna Fail Party, this implication. To offset it Mr Cosgrave and still more Mr de Valera were in turn at great pains to emphasize the importance of the League of Nations against that of the Commonwealth. The Irish point of view has consistently been that intra-Commonwealth disputes are international disputes and, therefore, should not be reserved, but referred to an international tribunal. In the broader fields of foreign policy, a distinctive line has been pursued so far as circumstances allowed, but the emphasis on the League resulted in the middle nineteen-thirties in a coincidence in outlook between British and Irish representatives at Geneva. To take the outstanding example, despite the very close links between Ireland and Italy, Mr de Valera advocated a strong League policy and supported sanctions in the Abyssinian dispute as he had done in the earlier Sino-Japanese dispute. He felt profoundly that here the League had its last chance of effective justification. But he had to face considerable opposition at home particularly when the policy of sanctions against Italy brought him face to face both with Catholic sentiment and with an anti-British sentiment to which the thought of such intimate co-operation with Britain in the international field was anathema. To a protagonist of this school of thought, Mr de Valera retorted in the Dail, 'if your worst enemy happens to be going to heaven by the same road as you

are, you do not for that reason turn around and go in the opposite direction.' But once the League had failed to save Abyssinia, Mr de Valera made no secret of the fact that he believed, also, that the experiment in international government, which it had embodied, had broken down and must be abandoned. From then onward he was convinced that another European war was coming and publicly stated that the only course to be adopted by Eire was neutrality.

To Mr de Valera and indeed to the great majority of Irishmen, neutrality appeared as a final vindication of sovereign status. It was final, convincing evidence of freedom and in that sense it was a psychological necessity. But there are two things to be noted about the policy of neutrality. The first is that it was a policy not deriving exclusively from the concept of external association. As the debate in the South African House of Commons in September 1939 made so abundantly clear, the decision between peace and war rested with each Dominion Parliament. If Eire be regarded as a Dominion, there was no difference in principle between a South African Parliament deciding by a small majority against neutrality, and the Dail deciding virtually unanimously in favour of it. However important the consequences in practice, the neutrality of Eire did not mark a final break with Dominion status. Here again there is something in the argument that because Eire remained a Dominion in name, her determination to pursue her own course was thereby reinforced. But this is not to be pressed too far. Neutrality was not so much the product of external considerations as of internal conditions. Mr de Valera gave the most convincing summary of them immediately after the American entry into the war, a moment when the foundations of Irish policy were challenged. After describing Ireland's

position as that of a 'friendly neutral', he added, 'from the moment that the war began there was for us only one policy possible—neutrality. Our circumstances, our history, the incompleteness of our national territory from the partition of our country made any other policy impracticable. Any other policy would have divided our people, and for a divided nation to fling itself into war would be to commit suicide.'

By this policy of neutrality Eire's detachment from the other nations of the Commonwealth during one of the most critical periods in their history was underlined, but the character of her association with it was not fundamentally altered, though the normal machinery of intra-Commonwealth consultation was presumably suspended so far as she was concerned, her policy made inevitable her exclusion from the Commonwealth Conferences of 1944 and 1946, and she was not invited in 1948.

About Eire's neutrality there was an element of misunderstanding on both sides—and by misunderstanding I mean a genuine failure to understand. In Britain it was recognized that Eire had a right to exercise a free choice on the vital issue of peace and war, but it was felt by some that in the case of war against aggression, naked and unashamed, there was a certain moral obligation for all members of the Commonwealth to act in concert. It was felt in such circumstances that the unity of the Commonwealth should transcend individual or sectional interests. Membership of the Commonwealth carries with it obligations as well as benefits, and in a war for survival the obligations could not be lightly overlooked. These feelings, though they received expression from persons in official positions, were given no official endorsement. To this wise restraint Mr de Valera inserted a diplomatic tribute in his reply to the American note of 1944 requesting

the removal of the Axis Legations from Dublin. He observed then, 'It is perhaps not known to the American Government that the feelings of the Irish people towards Britain have undergone a considerable change, precisely because Britain has not attempted to violate our neutrality.' Britain, he remarked on another occasion, had behaved 'not unworthily'. All is well that ends well, but undoubtedly Eire's confused constitutional relations with the Commonwealth were responsible for a good deal of the misunderstanding that existed. In both Britain and Ireland, an influential section of opinion approached neutrality from different points of view because each started from different premises. The United Kingdom Government had stated that Eire remained a Dominion; Eire maintained that she was not a Dominion but a sovereign State externally associated with the Commonwealth. Because she was externally associated her moral obligations—she had no treaty obligations after the return of the ports in 1938—were, so it was argued, comparable, not with those of the oversea Dominions, but with those of Holland or Belgium, Norway or Sweden, or Portugal or indeed the United States. None of these countries had in fact entered the war unless and until they had been attacked. Therefore, why should Eire enter the war unless she were attacked? The Commonwealth, it was concluded, had no justifiable cause for complaint. This line of argument implied that association unlike Dominion status carried no obligations in a war against aggression, without its exponents fully realizing that they were, by implication, fixing upon external association so negative an interpretation. Was there then no difference between a foreign State and an associated State?

To condemn neutrality as unrealistic was an altogether different matter. The Irish correspondent of *The Round*

Table, writing after the Munich crisis, remarked, 'One has only to look at the map to realize that Ireland could not remain neutral in a major war in which Great Britain was engaged.'¹ But Mr de Valera calculated otherwise and partly by diplomatic skill and, still more, thanks primarily to Ireland's position on the map, was enabled to pursue his chosen policy, without deviation and not without dignity, until the end of the war.

Now that the tensions—let us admit them—and the growing co-operation—let us not overlook it—of the war years are a matter of the past, it is well to consider what lessons are to be drawn in the field of Commonwealth relations. One lesson, I think, is that calling a country a Dominion, which does not aspire to be a Dominion, is liable at critical moments to promote not understanding, but misunderstanding. Another is that external association on the lines originally contemplated by the Irish delegates in 1921 is likely to provide a more satisfactory basis for common action in external affairs between two countries who share a wide community of interest but different political concepts, than Dominion status, based as it is on unwritten conventions. External association came into being as an alternative to Dominion status because it allowed of a form of government more acceptable to Irish opinion, but, at the same time, envisaged co-operation between Ireland and the Commonwealth in matters of common concern. This co-operation might well have been based on certain minimal common obligations freely undertaken by both parties. Its foundation would, therefore, have been more rigid, because defined, than the unwritten conventional basis of Commonwealth co-operation. Definition incurs some risks, but they are not so great as the risk of conventions which may be misunder-

¹ *The Round Table*, No. 113, December 1938, p. 34.

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stood or which may prove unacceptable. In the case of Eire, so intimate in many respects is the association with Britain and the Commonwealth, both socially and economically, that co-operation is a necessity, but in other places where these non-political bonds are less strong, the soundness and the suitability of the constitutional foundation may well prove of the most vital importance.

In thinking of external association it is easy, in the light of Irish experience, to put too much emphasis on the adjective, too little on the noun. But the essential foundation for this concept is the desire on the part of two or more countries to be associated. If one turns one's eyes away from the frigid, constitutional field one finds indeed that relations between Britain and Ireland are in many respects more intimate than between any other of the partners of the Commonwealth. In the economic field the trade figures over the past twenty years bear the most striking testimony to the mutual interdependence of the two countries and, more recently, no one will have missed the significance of Eire's co-operation in the Marshall Plan. There was sober realism in Mr Lemass's remark on his visit to Paris in 1947 to the effect that 'We have an interest in preserving the exchange value of British money,' though he added characteristically and reasonably that any plan which emerged from the Paris Conference must be designed to benefit all countries equally, and concluded that provided that was done 'Eire was ready to co-operate in any measures to protect sterling and to develop the resources of the sterling area.' Behind Mr Lemass's statement lies the fact that after the war the Irish sterling balance was some £400 million; while on the other hand her balance of trade with the dollar area tended to become progressively more unfavourable. In the first five months of 1947 Eire's imports from North America were calculated

to have amounted to some £8.5 million and her exports to only £117,000, and only a small part of this gap was bridged by invisible exports.¹ Eire's interest, therefore, in reducing dollar expenditure and increasing trade within the sterling area is almost as great as Britain's. It is in this context that the 1947 and 1948 trade agreements between Britain and Ireland should be viewed. Their conclusion strengthened the balance of payments position of the sterling area as a whole, particularly by effecting substantial reductions in dollar requirements. More important still, the machinery which was set up in the form of a standing committee of officials to keep trade relations between Britain and Ireland under review enables all proposals for increasing trade to be considered sympathetically and practically 'within the limits of the economic policy of each country'. The possibilities of developing trade to mutual advantage have been underestimated in recent years, and the agreements afford welcome evidence that they are no longer to be neglected. The export of coal, agricultural machinery, and fertilizers from Britain, coupled with the proposed upward revision of prices for Irish agricultural products, should lead to a substantial increase in the exports of Eire's products to Britain. Certainly that has been the consistent policy of Mr Costello's inter-party Government since its accession to office. Close and continuing economic co-operation between the two countries at home and in the broader field of the European Recovery Plan is likely to have far-reaching and beneficial consequences.

But while the economic interdependence between Britain and Ireland must be duly underlined, more fundamental still is the scale of social intercourse between the two countries. Even during the war years there was a

¹ *The Economist*, 4 October 1947.

continuing flow of Irishmen into the United Kingdom. The number of volunteers from Eire serving in the Forces was certainly not less than 50,000 and the number of workers in war factories somewhere between 120,000–150,000. These were almost all men and women of the younger generation; and the fact of their having lived in England, in many cases having settled there permanently or married English wives, should have a lasting and beneficial effect on Anglo-Irish relations. Of the reactions to some of the recent English settlers in Ireland it is difficult to feel so confident. If in the political field the area of co-operation between Britain and Ireland is narrower than between Britain and the other Dominions and, in Mr de Valera's view—though not necessarily that of his successor—, is likely to remain so, as long as partition exists, the field of common interest is at least as wide. This is a point to be borne in mind because, if my line of thought is justified, the more important conclusions to be drawn from this review of Eire's relationship with the Commonwealth apply with most force not to Anglo-Irish relations, but to future relations with former non-self-governing territories in the East. The smaller the area of common interest in the social and economic field, the greater the importance of establishing a right relationship in external policy, in which is to be included the all-important and related fields of foreign affairs and defence.

External association is in a sense a *via media* between Dominion status and treaty relationship, but it is a mistake to think of it as a colourless compromise. Rightly regarded, it is the positive answer to a certain set of circumstances. Its foundation should be the desire of two or more independent countries to form a close and lasting association. In that, it is similar to Dominion status, but distinct from a treaty relationship which is normally founded on a

short-term coincidence of interest in a limited and particular field. On the other hand, as distinct from Dominion status, it rests, not upon a sense of underlying unity in history, development, and tradition, symbolized by allegiance to a common Crown, but upon a sense of partnership between two peoples with different histories and different loyalties, but sharing common interests, common aims in world politics, and, above all, a common sense of values. Viewed in this context it is at once apparent that the lessons to be drawn from Eire's relationship with the Commonwealth are instructive but limited. External association has never been put into practice because the United Kingdom and the oversea Dominions have never recognized that it exists. To them Eire remains a Dominion. And external association is naturally dependent for its proper working upon all parties to it recognizing it as the foundation of their relationship. Equally on the other side, the value of Irish experience is limited by the isolationist policy pursued for many years, though not recently, by the Eire Government. External association, rightly viewed, is an instrument for co-operation between independent States, not a means of bringing about an ever greater degree of detachment.

From this survey of Ireland's relationship with the Commonwealth certain conclusions emerge which suggest that the wisdom of British policy in the strictly political field was not matched by an equal understanding in the constitutional field. Politically, the resolute determination of the United Kingdom to treat each question on its merits as it arose; to avert a final breach in the face of considerable provocation; to escape from formulae and to eschew finalities seems in retrospect to have been more than justified. For that policy the war provided the supreme test, and it is greatly to the credit of the United Kingdom

Government that it refused to be deflected from its chosen path during those critical years. The marked improvement in Anglo-Irish relations which we see to-day is the fruit of this policy of wise restraint. It represents a considerable political achievement towards which in recent years Lord Rugby, the first United Kingdom Representative to Ireland, has made no small contribution.

On the constitutional side the conclusions are more negative. The initial mistake was made in 1921; it was persisted in in 1937, and only to-day are Anglo-Irish relations escaping from its consequences. That mistake was the application of Dominion status to the Irish Free State. Because of it the constitutional ties with the Commonwealth acted as an irritant in relations with the United Kingdom, and more and more, as years went by, were a barrier to the partnership which community of interest demanded. The removal of the symbols of this status by Mr de Valera was—it is paradoxical but true—an essential preliminary to full and cordial co-operation with the countries of the Commonwealth. From that point of view it is open to question, particularly in the light of recent debates in the Dail, whether the one remaining constitutional link embodied in the External Relations Act any longer possesses practical advantages outweighing its psychological disadvantages.

Unfortunate also in some respects have been the consequences of the initial constitutional mistake for the Commonwealth as a whole. Irish policy in the past twenty-five years has been directed not deliberately but inevitably towards a loosening of the fabric of Commonwealth co-operation. Every step she has taken to emphasize her national as against her Dominion status has stimulated one or more of the oversea Dominions to follow in the same path. The emphasis she has placed on the theoretic con-

ception of absolute national sovereignty has deflected the thought of the Commonwealth away from its natural line of development. By making the Irish Free State conform to a constitutional relationship inappropriate to her circumstances and outlook, the character of the relationship itself has been modified. Many Irishmen, profoundly concerned to maintain the strength and unity of the Commonwealth in the post-war world, acknowledge that almost every step towards the fulfilment of their national aspirations has incidentally involved some weakening of this community of nations. But they maintain they were placed in a position in which no alternative course was open to them just because, in 1921, the Irish Free State was forced into a pattern in which she had no natural place. From the point of view of the Commonwealth the lesson to be drawn is the supreme importance of reconciling constitutional forms with political and psychological realities.

It is because external association was the constitutional relationship contemplated by Irish republicans in 1921, that it provides so good a starting point for an examination of what may be the most satisfactory relationship with the newly established nation-States of the East. To-day indeed the new relationship between the United Kingdom and Burma in certain essentials corresponds more closely to external association than that with Eire, but possibly it was not so designated because the political background of the governing group of parties in Burma, the Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League, made any association with the Commonwealth difficult. Burma, it is stated in the Burma Independence Bill, shall become on 6 January 1948, 'an independent country neither forming part of His Majesty's Dominions nor entitled to His Majesty's protection'. By that decision, Burma is likely in the long run to lose considerably, for while the material foundation remains the

same the sense of intimate and growing partnership may well be lost. No one would wish to question the very real measure of goodwill that exists towards Britain in Burma to-day, but goodwill tends to be transient. Under the Treaty of Relationship which has now been established, it will find little scope for expression in day-to-day relations over a period of years. Whatever may be the intentions and hopes of the signatories, treaties are usually interpreted in a literal and restrictive sense. They are not a stepping-stone to a closer and more intimate relationship, just because they provide no machinery for making relations more intimate. It is here that the concept of association could have made a valuable and distinctive contribution. Even had it been based upon a treaty whose essentials corresponded in almost every particular to the details of the Treaty actually signed, association with the Commonwealth would have allowed for a continuing and expanding consultation and co-operation in all matters of common concern. As a direct consequence the area of common interest might have widened as the years went by and the friendship deepened. Therein lies the supreme merit of association as against treaty relationship. It allows, it is designed to allow, for growth.

In 1921 Mr Lloyd George asked the question, how best can Ireland's national aspirations be reconciled with the community of nations known as the British Empire? The question to be asked to-day is, can the interests of India, of Pakistan, and, in a rather different context, of Ceylon be reconciled with those of the community of nations known as the British Commonwealth and if so, how can this best be done? To-morrow the same question will be asked in Africa and in the West Indies, and they will be profoundly influenced by the Asian precedents, whatever they may be. It is quite certain that in answering this question

Irish experience has a significance all its own. So far the question is answered once again by Dominion status. For India and Pakistan this is acknowledged to be a temporary expedient. What is the long-term solution? It goes without saying that there will be no lasting relationship unless the peoples of Asia desire it. Whether they will desire it depends now to no small extent on what is offered to them. The statesmen of the British Commonwealth have always maintained that its greatest virtue is flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances. The boast is justified, but recently—is it since the 1926 declaration?—there has crept in an element of standardization. Dominion status is the goal whatever the background.

A few months ago in New Delhi a distinguished Indian statesman remarked to me that Dominion status could not in the long run work in countries like Ireland or like India which were themselves mother countries. In that there is much truth. But an even greater objection exists when in addition there is no common historical background. That a final solution will be found to Anglo-Irish relations may be regarded as a reasonable expectation, just because over and above the wide area of common interest there is a common background. Both Britain and Ireland and the oversea Dominions are peopled by men of European stock who are the heirs of the Christian civilization of the West. A much more formidable problem arises when one contemplates transplanting a political concept peculiar to this Western civilization to the East. It is perfectly true that one of the results, and I believe one of the most beneficial results, of British rule in India has been the spread of ideas of democracy and constitutional government. At the Inter-Asian Conference English was the official language, and the delegates from almost all countries, other than the Soviet Asian republics, tactitly assumed in this dawning

of liberated and triumphant nationalism that a parliamentary social democracy was the form of government at which all should aim. During its deliberations I thought more than once of Macaulay's words: 'The sceptre may pass from us. Victory may be inconstant to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverse. There is an Empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason . . . that Empire is the imperishable Empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws.' Of our language and our laws that may yet prove to be true. Politically it is very important and it encourages the hope of close and lasting co-operation in the future. What form should it take?

Dominion status depends for its working upon a whole set of ideas, a whole range of common associations, containing nice implications only to be readily understood by people whose background and whose training have been very similar. But how can the peoples of the East attach precisely the right weight to all these unwritten conventions and think instinctively along the lines on which we have been accustomed to think in Commonwealth affairs? What is dangerous is not a difference of view within the Commonwealth—that in many respects is healthy—but misunderstanding. The appeal of the Pakistan Government to the other Commonwealth Governments at the height of the communal warfare in the Punjab was a portent and a warning. It may be, and in many cases will be, that representatives of the Eastern States will have difficulty in recognizing precisely what are the obligations or what, for that matter, are the benefits of Commonwealth membership. Even a paper so well informed as the *Manchester Guardian*¹ recently remarked that 'as long as India and Pakistan remain Dominions they have the

¹ 11 October 1947.

automatic guarantee of the British Alliance.' What does that mean? We know that there is no alliance in any formal sense binding the partners of the Commonwealth. But do the great mass of the Indian people? We know from past experience that in the event of aggression the member States of the Commonwealth of their own choice will freely unite to resist it, but we know equally that this common action derives from a common outlook and common sense of values and rests on no formal obligation arising automatically when war begins. But it is doubtful if public opinion in an Asian country, or for that matter any country with a different historical background, would rightly understand anything so flexible and so conventional. They might well tend to assume that at the least there existed an overwhelming moral obligation which, in certain not inconceivable circumstances, not all the partners in the Commonwealth would be prepared to admit.

Mr Peter Fraser in a message to the Indian people declared that Dominion status means 'independence plus'. But Indians, wondering whether or not their country should continue to have Dominion status, will want to know plus what? The advantages are solid and substantial, but the Indian mind which, in common with the Irish and the French, inclines towards precision, would welcome them more if at least the foundations on which this new relationship may be built could be more closely defined. It was, for example, my impression both in New Delhi and Karachi that informed public opinion was not favourably impressed by the fact that Commonwealth flexibility to-day was so great that it allowed the neutrality of one partner in a major war. The prevailing view seemed to be that the right to remain neutral in such circumstances might well be regarded as an asset for countries

in a sheltered geographical position, but for India and Pakistan it was not an asset, but a liability. It subtracted from the strength of the Commonwealth and introduced a disturbing degree of uncertainty. The Irish precedent in effect reinforced the demand for greater definition. Now definition is wholly alien to Dominion status: Mr Lloyd George said in 1921 it would be extremely dangerous to attempt to define it and that is equally true to-day. There is left one expedient, external association, or association as I would prefer to call it, which would diminish the dangers of definition and which, at the same time, would maintain partnership. It is here that the most valuable lesson of Anglo-Irish relations is to be found. It is not in external association as it has evolved, but rather in external association as it was originally conceived. In other words, it should have a foundation of common purpose and mutual obligation stated and clearly understood by both parties. On that foundation the association could grow without fear of any fundamental misunderstanding, and little by little conventions could be added which would enrich and deepen the association. As against a treaty, such as that recently signed with Burma, it would, as I have already emphasized, have the great advantages of allowing for growth. We would not have to treat one another as foreign countries. That in itself would be an immeasurable gain. As against Dominion status external association, by defining the foundations to the extent that seems desirable in each individual case, removes many potential causes of misunderstanding and, incidentally, the slightest suggestion of subordination. Otherwise thorny questions of allegiance and of the place of the Crown would be settled on their merits by mutual agreement and it must be frankly recognized that the concept of a common Crown as a symbol of unity might or might not prove acceptable.

'If no place can be found in a British Commonwealth for republics', wrote the late Professor Berriedale Keith in 1938, 'then the enduring character of the Commonwealth may well be doubted.'¹ The new constitution of India is a republican constitution. If the Union of India is to remain within the Commonwealth it will remain so as a republic.

Here the decision of Burma to leave the Commonwealth must be considered again from a different point of view. The choice which she made is not one which the members of the Commonwealth can, or should, regard with any complacency. It suggests at the least that a new approach is required. The problem is perhaps as much psychological as political. It is believed in Burma, as it is believed in every Asian country, that Dominion status means subordination. No amount of explanation will remove the conviction that somehow or other, whatever its material advantages, Dominion status implies something less than full sovereignty. It is perfectly understandable how this conviction became implanted in the Asian mind. It is only within the last two decades that Dominion status has, in fact, carried with it full sovereign status, and many of the political leaders and intellectuals, to whom these things are a matter of direct concern and who influence public opinion, first learned of Dominion status in the years when it meant something less than it means to-day. The very fact that the years that elapsed between the Imperial Conference of 1926 and the outbreak of the Second World War witnessed an intense pre-occupation within the Commonwealth with questions of status, of the right to neutrality, of secession, inevitably suggested that the Dominions doubted whether they were fully masters of their own destinies. If they were certain why were they so concerned with these things? The impression then

¹ *The Dominions as Sovereign States* (London, Macmillan, 1938), p. ix.

received has not been eradicated, and it is my firm conviction that no amount of discussion will eradicate it. The stigma, if that is the right word, is one that cannot be removed by lucid exposition of the facts, or at any rate cannot be removed in this way in time. If, therefore, the only possibility that lies before the Asian peoples contemplating partnership within the Commonwealth is Dominion status, the misapprehensions and the psychology that lies behind them may well lead to a decision to go outside the Commonwealth. The emotional background in this way reinforces the political and constitutional considerations, which lead one to suggest that some new form of association, call it external association or any other name you will, is needed. One advantage of external association is that no one in Asia, or in any other continent, has ever supposed that the actions of Mr de Valera were in any way controlled by the British Government, or that any subordinate status would ever have been acceptable to him. The integrity of his nationalism is above suspicion. By broadening the basis of the Commonwealth in this way, the associated States including Eire need not, unless they so desire, feel outside it, but a natural element within it.

At this stage one important question arises. In a Commonwealth composed of autonomous and sovereign States there can be no distinction in status, but there would be a difference in relationship between the States that are Dominions and the States that are more formally associated. Both would be full and equal partners, but the origin from which their partnership derived would be different. What would be the relation between them? If the experiment were tried, I believe that in practice this problem would be solved satisfactorily by regarding all partners in the Commonwealth as having equal privileges

and mutually agreed obligations, and using the defined relationship of the associate States as a statement of first principles to which appeal is made only on those rare and critical occasions for which it was designed to provide. In saying this I do not wish to dismiss this difficulty lightly, but I believe it is certainly not insurmountable. An element of constitutional untidiness is a small price to pay for a flexibility in Commonwealth relations, which enables peoples of many races and different traditions to co-operate wholeheartedly in the common purposes which the Commonwealth serves in the world.

The implications of Eire's relationship with the Commonwealth have led us, therefore, into new fields. They suggest a Commonwealth of the future, in which there are both member States and associate States, the distinction between them being one, not of status, but of history, tradition, and cultural background. By such a development the Commonwealth could only be strengthened, for it would mean that political and constitutional realities would once again be brought into harmony. In this great community there would be a natural place for nations peopled by many races and speaking many tongues but all, from their vast store of varied experience, contributing to the common good of the whole and thereby to the peace of the world.

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